CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS:
VIOLENCE, DEATH AND MOURNING IN KURDISH SOCIETY

by

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CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS: VIOLENCE, DEATH AND MOURNING IN KURDISH SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the experiences of people who lost their relatives in the 1990s, specifically people from Diyarbakır and Dersim. People who lost their lives during intense conflicts were either buried where they were killed or were left unburied. Relatives who could not find their bodies started to search for them, only able to locate the ones buried in newly built cemeteries. For this research, in-depth interviews were conducted with the relatives who found and reburied their loved ones' bodies between 2013 to 2015, and with the workers of these cemeteries. Critically engaging with these narratives, this analysis focuses on the process of how witnessing violence restructures practices of mourning. Thus far the voices of the relatives who've lost their loved ones, who were exposed to "violence," a "hierarchy of mourning" and the politics of "death without grave," have not been participatory voices in public space, public discussions as well as in the academic literature on this topic. However, how they experienced these multi-layered, common and systematic politics is an important part of this discussion. Beginning with the narratives of relatives who could not locate their loved ones' bodies for years and thus could not bury them properly, this research scrutinizes how this experience and its structural process have affected personal and collective memories in Kurdish society, focusing on the ways subjects mobilize towards politics through the experiences of mourning, and the inability to mourn. Related with these experiences, the cemeteries that recovered bodies buried after 2013 form another point of analysis, as they became extraordinary spaces of tangible memory and mourning, becoming discursive sites upon which to analyze "the relation between human beings and space" and "the effects of space." This study aims to humbly contribute to the literature by underscoring the testimonies and experiences of utterly muted subjects, as the result of the "discriminatory distribution" of mourning in public spaces.

ÖZET

MEZARLIKLAR VE ANMA TÖRENLERİ:
KÜRT TOPLUMUNDA ŞİDDET, ÖLÜM VE YAS

DERYA AYDIN

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Eylül 2017

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Leyla Neyzi

Anahtar sözcükler: yas, hafıza, Kürtler, Kürt Hareketi, kayıp, şehitlik, mezarlık

Bu tez, 1990'lı yıllarda çatışmalarda hayatını kaybeden kayıp yakınlarının kayıpla başetme deneyimlerini Diyarbakır ve Dersim özelinde incelemektedir. Yoğun çatışma dönemlerinde hayatını kaybedenler öldükleri yerlerde defnedilmiş veya hiçbir şekilde defnedilmeyip gömülmemiş-açıkta bırakılmışlardır. Bu ölü bedenlere / kemiklere yıllarca ulaşamayan kayıp yakınları, 2013 tarihi itibariyle bu cenazeleri aramaya başlamış, bulabildikleri cenazeleri yeni inşa edilen mezarlıklara defnetmişlerdir. Tezde, 2013 ile 2015 yılları arasında yakınlarının cenazelerini bulup yeniden defneden kayıp yakınları ve inşa edilen bu mezarlıklarda çalışan kişilerle derinlemesine mülakatlar yapılmıştır. Bu anlatılardan yola çıkılarak şiddet tanıklıklarının yas tutma pratiğini nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiği incelenmiştir. "Şiddet", "yas hiyerarşisi" ve "mezarsızlık" politikalarına maruz kalan kayıp yakınları kamusal alanın / tartışmaların ve akademik literatürün tamamen dışına itilmiştir. Kayıp yakınlarının bu çok katmanlı, yaygın ve sistematik polikaları deneyimleme biçimleri de araştırmanın önemli bir parçasıdır. Araştırmada, kayıp yakınlarının yaşadıklarının Kürt toplumu üzerindeki etkileri ve bireysel ve kolektif hafızaların şekillenmesindeki rolüne de ayrı bir inceleme konusu olarak yer verilmiştir. Tezde, öznelerin politikaya mobilize olma biçimleri yas tutma ve / veya yas tutamama deneyimleri özelinde ele alınmaktadır. Bu deneyimlerle bağlantılı olarak, bulunan cenazelerin 2013 itibariyle defnedildiği mezarlıklar araştırmanın diğer bir odağıdır. Yas ve hafızanın mekânı olarak somutlaşan, sıra dışı bir yer olarak karşımıza çıkan bu mezarlıkların duygusu ve burada gerçekleştirilen pratikler, mekânın insanla ilişkisi ve insan üzerindeki etkileri bağlamında incelenmiştir. Bunlara ek olarak yasın kamusal alandaki "ayrımcı dağıtımı"ndan dolayı tamamen susturulmuş öznelerin tanıklık ve deneyimlerinin incelenmesiyle bu alandaki literatüre katkı sunulması hedeflenmiştir.

To beautiful Ceyda (Zengin) who still does not have a grave

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the negotiations between Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan - Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the state, not having tombstones for people who were murdered by unknown assailants was among one of the covered subjects. During the days of the negotiations, whenever this subject came to the fore, one of the first names that the media focused on was Berfo Karabayır, who was known as Berfo Ana.[1] The biggest dream of Berfo Ana was to obtain the body of her son who was lost at the hands of the state, and to build a tomb for him. However, Berfo Ana passed away when she was 106, without obtaining her son's body. The state condemned her to her biggest grief.

During that time, the losses of other bodies became more visible in the public space through the actions of the *Cumartesi Anneleri* (Saturday Mothers)[2] and Berfo Ana, and building tombs for PKK guerrillas began. PKK guerillas who lost their lives during the 1990s when the Kurdish-Turkish conflict was at its peak, was not a subject that could be discussed in public spaces however, in the two years between the spring of 2013 until the summer of 2015, guerrilla cemeteries were swiftly constructed in thirteen different areas. Guerillas who lost their lives in the 1990s during the war's most intense years were buried where they were found and in recent years most of theirs tombs were lost. In that period, guerrillas found and carried the bodies of their fallen in the 1990s by roaming around the mountains of Northern Kurdistan, and those who lost their lives in the war of Rojava continued synchronously were started, began to be buried in these cemeteries. These cemeteries that were constructed in a short period of time became a space that Kurds frequently visited. One of these cemeteries was built in Bitlis. When I spoke on the phone with my father in 2014 and 2015 when the cease-fire was still active, I noticed that he frequently mentioned this cemetery. As the ones from Rojava were buried there, my father was visiting this place along with many others. In those years, whenever I went back to Bitlis, I heard many guerrilla stories,

[1] No news was obtained from Berfo Karabayır's son Cemil Karabayır since he was taken under custody after the coup on 12 September 1980. Berfo Ana, who fought for having news from his son for years, when the ceasefire was announced, became the symbol of *Saturday Mothers.* She had a meeting with the President of the Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

[2] Saturday Mothers are relatives of the forcibly disappeared. They protest state policy by repeating their demands in Galatasaray Square.

including many I had not heard before about guerrillas' memories, martyrdom and their patriotic death. In 2014, girls from the village came to my house and said that they would visit the guerrilla tombs and asked me if I wanted to join them. It is important to underscore that they invited me to visit the cemeteries during *bayram*. Why were people visiting these cemeteries? What do these cemeteries mean for Kurdish people? How were the families involved in this process of signification?

In the meantime, Kurds started to protest in different cities against the Turkish government's silence regarding ISIS's siege (ad-dawla al-ʾislāmiyya fī l-ʿirāq waš-šām, literally "the Islamic State of / in Iraq and Syria") of Kobanê in October 2014. The main goal of these protests was to push Turkey to act and open up a corridor to Kobanê and end the siege. Protests started on the 6th of October and turned into *serhildan*[3] in many cities. In the first four days, the protests were suppressed through police brutally. According to the reports of İHD (*İnsan Hakları Derneği* – Human Rights Association), there were "46 deaths, 682 wounded and 323 detained."[4] In a short while, *serhildans* spread to several Turkish cities and all cities of Northern Kurdistan, and a curfew was announced. One of the cities that led *serhildans* was Bitlis, the city where I was born. Some districts of Bitlis like Hizan, Mutki and Tatvan became locations of unprecedented protests. What was the main reason for Bitlis to host *serhildans,* though it was renowned for its conservative and rightist identity rather than its national identity, even though it had been introduced to the Kurdish movement right after 1990s? These *serhildans* encouraged me to think about the reason for this situation. Within the scope of a course that I took in that period, I started thinking about the effects of the guerrilla cemeteries on the Kurdish people, particularly after reading Yael Navaro's *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity.* Also, what value did these losses hold in the public opinion of Turkey? Butler argues if "certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense." She adds, "the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or vulnerable) are politically saturated." (Butler, 2005) Does the fact that Kurdish people have been visiting guerrilla cemeteries for two years during feasts lead to conceiving the death of guerillas—for whom no mourning is possible in Turkey—as "lost"?

[3] The Kurdish word refers to resistance
[4] http: / / www.baskahaber.org / 2014 / 10 / ihdden-kobani-eylemleri-raporu-46-kisi.html [access date 07.06.2017]

Within the lights of these questions, I visited cemeteries built in 2015 in Dersim -*Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery*- and in Bitlis -*Shekh Cuman Cemetery.* After seeing people visiting these places regularly and intensively, I started to think about what these places mean to people who'd lost their loved ones there.

By focusing on the narratives of the relatives of guerillas who are buried in Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery and Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery, the mourning process in Kurdistan will be analyzed. At its core, this research considers how the close relatives (mothers, fathers, children, spouses and first-degree relatives) of guerillas who lost their lives during the armed conflicts of the PKK deal with the losses that they experienced. How do mourning and commemorations take place in these cemeteries? What is the relationship between a grave and mourning? How are these places related to the ability to mourn? What is the relationship between mourning and struggle-resistance? In this context, this research will focus on mourning practices. Moreover, related to this, the other focus of this research is constructed upon the role of martyrs' cemetery that were built by PKK guerrillas and the public during the ceasefire period between 2013 and 2015 in the practices of mourning.

Within the scope of this research, the literature on Kurdish identity and Kurdistan will be analyzed. In relation to mourning and collective memory, various theories regarding on mourning, loss and the hegemon's regulations about these processes by Judith Butler, Emmanuel Levinas, Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben structure this thesis's theoretical frame. Especially by taking Butler's mourning and violence practices into consideration, concepts developed by Butler, such as "vulnerability," "precarity" and "hierarchy of grief" are scrutinized specific to the mourning practices in Kurdistan. These theories argue that "mourning" is a universal experience, and thus the claim that precarious groups may form a common space or sharing space / shared collectivism (*müşterek ortaklık*)[5] is analyzed through the narratives of people who lost their relatives.

Kurdish literature regarding Kurdistan in the 1990s is also analyzed. Most of the studies were conducted through the methodology of oral history and based on the witness of subjects who faced state violence.[6] These too are analyzed in relation to mourning to understand the conflicts

[5] See. (Butler, 2005, Agamben, 2013 and Levinas, 1997)
[6] See (Ozsoy 2010, Akın, Danışman, 2012, Akkaya and Işık, Önen, Baykuş and Bilmez 2015; Akkaya and Jongerden 2009, 2014; Jongerden and Şimşek 2015 Uysal, 2016, Çelik 2016, Göral, 2016)

that took place in Kurdistan in the 1990s, the strategies of the state and PKK, and how and in what ways people were able to deal with their losses and the state violence they faced every day.

Borrowing the frameworks created by witness-oriented history writing in Latin America (especially in Argentina) in the 1960s and 70s, I analyze its relevance in relation to this study (Cecilia, 2009: 250-265 and Robben, 2005: 120-164). Both the war in Argentina and the one in Kurdistan since the 1990s are compared in relation to results and state practices. However, before this, I will give space to the Kurdish issue and the historical aspect in four parts of Kurdistan. Lastly, in order to understand the societies' semantic worlds and the factors which mobilize them, literature on emotions[7] is analyzed. All these new studies remark on the role of catastrophes and emotions shaping subjects and cultures.

By employing concepts like "the relation between human beings and space" and "the effects of space" from Yael Navaro's research that scrutinizes the interaction between the subject and object underscored in Cyprus, guerrilla cemeteries and practices taking place in those places are analyzed within the scope of affective geographies (Navaro, 2009: 1-18).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research is based on the narratives of relatives of guerrillas who lost their lives in the 1990s. Guerrillas who lost their lives in the 1990s were exposed to a "hierarchy of grief" in a construction of dominance. Just as in life, their deaths were not found valuable. In line with this, as the living guerrillas were defined in the public space as "terrorists," dead guerrilla bodies were defined as *leş* (carrion). Therefore, the PKK guerrillas who lost their lives in conflicts were not "properly" buried for many years– and some of them are still not "properly" buried. By leaving and neglecting them where they died, their relatives were precluded from bring them. Therefore, the location of most of the graves are not known. How then do thousands of guerrillas' relatives[8] experience this process? How do people deal with losses in the geography where losing has been continuous since the period of intense conflicts in the 1990s? How do relatives of guerrillas, who on the one hand witnessed the violence and on the other hand were also targets of the violence, realize their

[7] See. (Ahmed, 2014; Navaro, 2012; Das and Klein 2000).
[8] The term relative does not only include mothers, fathers and siblings. As it will be seen in the research, spouses of guerillas and their children were left behind, as well.

mourning practices? How do these relatives deal with the state's systematic and wide spread politics by not knowing where the graves of their loved ones were? How do they define / describe their experienced hierarchy of grief which was structured systematically? What do these "abnormal deaths" that were kicked out of the public discussions mean to the Kurdish society? How does having / not being able to practice the experience of mourning mobilize towards politics? Also, what does it mean in the Kurdish society to be a relative of a dead guerrilla?

The other focus of this research is the cemeteries built for guerrillas. Between 2013 and 2015 when the PKK announced a ceasefire and the conflict was stopped, an intensive search for the bodies of guerrillas who died in 1990s and whose graves locations were not known began. Simultaneously, cemeteries for the lost[9] were built. By 2014, guerrilla cemeteries were built in thirteen different locations of Northern Kurdistan.[10] In this research, specific to Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery built in Lice and Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery in Dersim in 2013, the PKK cemeteries are analysed. The relations between these spaces and the practices of mourning are analysed through the narratives of buried relatives. On top of them, as an example of material culture and the outcome of participant observation, a visual analysis of these cemeteries is also presented. It is important to note that although the PKK started the search for the graveyards of the lost guerrillas, in a short while, an important number of relatives joined in this process. How did the PKK find the guerrillas' cemeteries after so many years? Why were these bodies sent to some cemeteries? Why were the ones who lost their lives in the 1990s taken out of their graves and moved to cemeteries? Also, why were they not taken to public cemeteries? Why were these cemeteries built? Who built them? What was the reaction of the state in relation to these buildings? How did the relatives of lost ones experience the process of finding their relatives' bodies and building these cemeteries? What are the physical features of these cemeteries which were named as "Martyrs' Cemetery?" How are they different from public cemeteries? Who went to these cemeteries; who refused to go? Were they able to deconstruct the "discriminatory distribution" of mourning in the public space? What were the practices that took place in these cemeteries? As extraordinary and tangible memory and mourning spaces, how did these places affect personal and collective memories in Kurdish society?

[9] It refers to guerrilla losses throughout the text.
[10] It refers to the Kurdish region under the control / sovereignty of Turkey

On the other hand, with the restart of the conflict in Kurdistan, these cemeteries were majorly destroyed by the Turkish government. And although relatives kept watch in these places, they could not prevent the annihilation of these mourning sites. Why did the government which "shut its eyes to" these places' being built, destroy them? What did all these annihilations mean for relatives who dearly wished for their lost ones to have graves? Where should we situate the fact that these centuries were bombed as a part of the government's wide repertoire of violence? What is the relationship of these annihilations with the "hierarchy of grief" implemented in Turkey?

In addition, the relatives of lost ones who were exposed to "violence," a "hierarchy of mourning" and the politics of "not having a cemetery" were pushed out of public space / discussions and academic literature. Therefore, the number of studies on lost relatives is very limited. Those who were forcibly lost during the war in Kurdistan after the mid of 1990s, to became visible to some extent in the public space via the periodic protests of *Saturday Mothers* (Cumartesi Anneleri). Though limited, forcibly lost people became a subject in the public sphere. The academy as well has shown limited attention to this topic. However, the loss of guerrillas which might be accepted as the peak point of the "hierarchy of grief" was utterly pushed out of the public space. Although some women who attended the protests on Saturdays were also mothers of guerrillas, no discourse related with guerrilla loss found a place for itself in these meetings. Therefore, it can be said that the lost guerrillas were also excluded from Saturday protests, albeit by necessity.

This research will focus on the literature of mourning and grief, the literature on Kurds and Kurdistan within the scope of 1990s, and the literature on the war in Argentina. This research, starting from the narratives of those who could not recover their relatives' bodies for years and could not bury them properly, scrutinizes how these processes affected personal and collective memories in Kurdish society. This research also analyses the ways in which subjects mobilize towards politics through the experiences of mourning and the inability to mourn. To put the final aim in a nutshell, this research analyses how the people of Kurdistan, where deaths have become continuous in the last forty years, deal with their losses. This research aims to humbly contribute to the literature through the narratives of precarious groups, as Butler says, since they are moved out from the public space and academic knowledge production. To understand "The Kurdish Issue" which has been on national and international agendas over the last century, and to develop

suggestions for solutions, focusing on the relatives' narratives, and their testimonies of violence and personal experiences, is an integral part of this process.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL CONCERNS

This research explores how the closest relatives (mothers, fathers, children, spouses and relatives) of the militants who lost their lives in the armed struggle of the PKK deal with their loss. Thus, the research will focus on the mourning practices of these people. In addition, in connection with this, another focus of the research will be the cemeteries / memorials built and dedicated to the PKK guerrillas and martyrs by the people between 2013 and 2015, when there was no armed clashes due to the peace negotiations.

2.1. Theoretical Overview

A limited number of studies has been conducted on the loss caused by the state violence in Kurdistan. "*Counter-Movement, Space and Politics: How the Saturday Mothers of Turkey Make Enforced Disappearances Visible"* (Ahıska, 2014) and "*"Remnants of State Violence: Loss, Mourning and Public Secrets"* (Göral, 2016) are among the first publications that come to mind. In addition, institutions such as the Human Rights Association (IHD) and the Truth Justice Memory Center have made significant efforts to register "civilian" losses, especially those of the people who have been forcibly disappeared and / or executed. These studies focus on the people who have been disappeared by the state actors and have not been mourned "properly" as they were kept unburied. Those in this category were expressed and made visible in the public realm as "civilian" losses. However, those who have been left graveless in Kurdistan's dirty war and subjected to the hierarchy of mourning are not just the forcibly disappeared civilians, but perhaps guerillas have been even more subjected to these practices. According to the data of the Truth Justice Memory Center, as of 2013, 22 thousand PKK guerillas lost their lives in the war.

Like those who were forcibly disappeared, the killed guerrillas were left graveless because they were subjected to a mourning hierarchy. Moreover, the members of this precarious group were not left graveless because they were disappeared. They were left openly and publicly in the sight of anyone, as their dead bodies were exposed on the mountain slopes, in the streams, and empty lands. The fact that those who were forcibly disappeared are left graveless has become a matter of

discussion in the public realm[11] to some extent, but the neglect of the guerrillas was never discussed. Because they were dehumanized in public, and reduced to bare lives, as Agamben (2001) put it, it was "natural" that their deaths were invisible.[12] Because guerrilla lives are not perceivable, recognizable lives, in Butler's (2005) terms, they are not grievable. As a matter of fact, since guerrilla life is not considered a life, these dead bodies are also called "carcasses" (*leş*) by militarized Turkish nationalists, as they are considered terrorists in the official discourse and the majority public. The policies that determine whether guerrilla lives are "worth living" have come to be ignored in the public arena because these losses, tens of thousands in number, have been completely ignored in the public discourses in Turkey. In addition, the voices of the relatives of PKK guerillas who lost their lives, were completely excluded from the Turkish public realm. Anthropologist Edwin Ardener deals with the concept of mutedness in the context of power relations. Using mutedness instead of silence, Ardner suggests that this also determines when and where people talk:

> Mutedness is due to the lack of power that besets any group occupying the low end of the totem pole. Ardener claims that mutedness does not necessarily mean that low power groups are completely silent, but that the issue is "whether people can say what they want to say when and where they want to say it" (Griffin, 2012: 461).

The Muted Group Theory, later developed by Cheris Kramarae, refers to the cause of muteness of a certain group of population. In his article titled "*Muted Group Theory' and Communication: Asking Dangerous Questions*" (2005), Kramarae argues that women are one of the most important muted groups. She goes on to say that the language of the dominant group typically influences the muted group in terms of how they are to communicate in the environment controlled by the dominant group. In this sense, it can be argued that there is a hierarchy in the public realm between the losses of the guerrillas and the losses of those who were forcefully disappeared.

That is also the reason why there is almost no academic work on the guerrilla losses. Thus, the main purpose of this research is to provide a modest contribution to the literature in this regard. An exception in the literature that does discuss this topic is the doctoral thesis written by Hişyar

[11] Saturdays Mothers' periodic meetings carried disappearances to the public space.
[12] Although some members of the Saturday Mothers were also guerillas' mothers, due to the hierarchy of grief, they were completely silent about them.

Özsoy (2010), titled "Between Gift and Taboo: Death and the Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey". In this work, Özsoy refers to the mourning hierarchy of the PKK's guerrillas, who have been dehumanized as "terrorists". Özsoy stated that the Republic's policies of "gravelessness" have been implemented since Sheikh Said and Seyyid Rıza, the leaders of Kurdish rebellions in the early Republican period. He focuses on what these people's deaths mean to the state and the Kurdish society. Özsoy puts the gravelessness as a state policy to the main focus of his work, and discusses the deaths of the guerrillas who are accepted as martyrs by the Kurds, and the practices in relation to these deaths. However, in 2013, graves for the guerrillas began to be built in Northern Kurdistan, which lead to the emergence of many multifaceted societal consequences. It emerged not only as an intervention to the politics of gravelessness, which the state exercised strategically, but also as a practice severely attacking the hierarchy of mourning (Özsoy 2010).

It is still unclear how many dead bodies are buried or left out in the open and / or lost without being buried, due to the limited work done in this regard. But it is known that the state's policy of gravelessness, especially in the 1990s, is steadily and widely oriented towards the PKK guerrillas in Kurdistan. As a result of my interviews with people who could not bury or mourn their relatives properly, it shows that this policy of the state is similar to or even more brutal than the policies related to forced disappearances. The torture conducted on the dead bodies of the guerrillas and their being left unburied reveals that there are no exceptions that unfold at a certain time and place. Rihan, who learned about the death of her son in 1998, could not receive the mortal remains of her son. The police officer obstructed the receiving of the mortal remains, and as the funeral was in the mountains, the soldiers prevented the family of the deceased to go up to the mountain to get the body. Rihan tells about what he experienced during this period as follows:

> We would go to the prosecutor's office but instead we went to the Lice military office. What did the soldiers say to us? Where were you until now, did not you know? Did not you hear from him? You let him out. The Sergeant's name was Zülfükar, and I think he said, "you give birth to your bastards, they go out, and become terrorists ..." He said so many terrible things: "As long as I am right here in this land, you cannot receive his body. I am not sure if you will even be able to receive it when I am dead! (Rihan, 2016)

Similarly, Ahmet tells as follows:

> He was martyred in '94. We received condolences, but we did not get the deceased body. But then it was already certain that no relatives of the martyrs could get the deceased. As soon as he was martyred, the state captured his body. We did not know where they took his body (Ahmet, 2016)

As these statements imply, this group, tens of thousands in number, has been left graveless, their lives have been ignored, and their relatives could not even mourn them due to the designed policies of the state. For this reason, this research has an important place in terms of focusing on the losses of the PKK guerrillas, which are completely excluded not only in the academy but also in public realm.

2.1.1. Mourning and Violence Literature

The literature which this research will take as references will be on mourning and memory. Although mourning and memory seem to be two separate bodies of literatures, recent researches, especially those based on the method of oral history, show that these two fields are closely related to each other. Although the issue of mourning has become the focus of some contemporary philosophers as an important subject of the modern period, as Kalaycı pointed out, the vulnerability of death is not related to modern thought, but to the most archaic forms of law (2014: 294). Besides being the main topics of study in anthropology, death, burial ceremonies, and grief have been depicted in different forms already in ancient Greek tragedies. Kalaycı (2014) refers to the examples of ancient Greek tragedy in the "Inappropriate Death", "Mourning" and the "testimony" in Classical Tragedies, which are focused on modern state politics around death, indicating that the practice of revoking an individual's right to is not a modern-day phenomenon. Sophocles'' *Antigone*, Euripides' *The Suppliant Women* in Ancient Greek tragedies will be included within the theoretical framework of this thesis, in terms of the meaning of loss for a society, the mourning practices, and the archaic roots of the mourning practices and related discussions.

The discipline of psychology has long dominated the modern literature on mourning. This literature, which is mostly influenced by Freud's (1917) psychoanalysis, can be said to have ignored the relation of mourning to the social and political field. In his work *Mourning and Melanchoy*, Freud (1917) compares the similarities and differences between mourning and melancholy in the context of their effects on individuals' psychologies. Freud (1917) distinguishes between "healthy / successful mourning" and "pathological / unsuccessful mourning" in the article

titled “Mourning and MelancholiaAccording to his theory, successful mourning is about putting another object / person in place of the lost object / person. On the other hand, unsuccessful mourning is a blocked one, a pathological condition of melancholy. In this pathological situation, the ego is captured by the lost object, and devoted itself to the lost object. In short, the morning in the literature of psychology been seen as a psychological phenomenon that has been pushed out of the realms of society and politics and has been investigated as affecting individuals' mind and body independently of society.

It can be said that the studies that focus on the mourning's influence on the social community and its relationship with the collective memory rather than the individual largely belong to the genocide literature. Armenian and Jewish genocides are some of the most widely studied ones. However, the literature on mourning has been shaped around the Holocaust.[13] In the last 50 years the Holocaust has established its hegemony in the literature of mourning. It is clear that the importance of the catastrophe and the uniqueness of the experience necessarily lead to this. Hundreds of memories, researches, and studies, literature and philosophy books, and articles have been published on the Holocaust in the last four decades. Similarly, many films focused on the Holocaust were made[14]. "To prevent the same disaster from happening again" the genocide and its repercussions have been moved to all areas of written and visual culture. The Holocaust was collectively referred to as "the International Holocaust Remembrance Day". The Holocaust profoundly influenced the contemporary western philosophy from Adorno to Agamben, Benjamin, and Hannah Arendt. However, it can be said that the literature of mourning and memory developing around the genocide has more focused on victimization. There are studies, though limited, focusing on resistance and agency, but the agency and resistance of the subjects have been ignored to a great extent. For instance, despite of multiple points of view in narrating the Holocaust, the majority of the literature focuses on the "helpless victims" versus the brutal violence of Hitler’s regime, and the violence and victimization penetrate memories blatantly. Similarly, the literature on mourning related to the Armenian genocide is heavily focused on the "pure" pain.[15] The practice of mourning and the memory created in this framework became a factor that made

[13] The Armenian genocide has never received as much academic attention as the Holocaust, which may be considered as a result of different factors such as the fact that the genocidal techniques used were different, and that it took place in the Ottoman period and in a geographical area far from the west.
[14] For example, Night and Fog (Resnais, 1995), Schindler’s List (Spielberg, 1993), The Pianist (Polanski, 2003).
[15] Marc Nichanian (2009), an important reference in this literature, also represents this line.

the subjects ("victims") passive. This literature, in which the victimization came into prominence, mostly took the national identity (especially for the Jews) as the context.[16] In the context of its relation to the collective memory, philosophers such as Judith Butler, Emmanuel Levinas, Walter Benjamin, and Giorgio Agamben will form the conceptual framework of this thesis on the constructions of mourning and loss, and the question of sovereignty in relation to these processes. I will focus on the stories about the "martyrs" and the mourning practice in Kurdistan on the basis of these theories. For these philosophers, mourning / loss / melancholy is an important focal point. Although their ideas intersect in certain directions, they are focused on different aspects of mourning. Judith Butler (2005) focuses on vulnerability and loss in relation to experiences of mourning and violence in her book titled *Precarious Life*. According to Butler, the fact that a person is vulnerable is associated with one's life being dependent on others he does not even know and will perhaps never get to know (2005: 7-8). This link cannot be broken, because vulnerability creates a bond that "one cannot get rid of by volition without giving up on being human". The issue of vulnerability pushes the other to think:

> To be vulnerable is to think about the vulnerability and its outcomes, through which mechanisms are shared, to have a chance to understand the people who have been through permeable boundaries, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and the ways they had these experiences. (ibid :8)

Butler (2014) argues that mourning of precarious groups is deemed invisible through denial or displacement. She states that this way a hierarchy of mourning is established. In this hierarchy, certain types of mourning [national, state-owned] are accepted in public places, while others are excluded from the public realm. In this discriminatory mourning hierarchy, certain "-vulnerable-groups are unimaginable and cannot be mourned about" (ibid: 10). Due to this hierarchy and othering, their status has been suspended, so they are not protected by law. Even though Butler wrote: "I confess that I do not know how mutual dependence is theorized," she argues that "it may be possible to re-imagine the presence of the community on the basis of vulnerability and loss" (ibid: 35).

Just like Butler, Levinas (1979) believes that fragility is a common denominator for people. According to Levinas, "between us and the other, there is a common bond of vulnerability that

[16] It can be argued that the Israeli Palestinian policies have found legitimate grounds in this narrative in certain ways.

holds me responsible for their lives, and them for mine" (1979)[17]. Levinas offers an ethical law by looking at the fragility of the other. He uses the “face figure” that is able to transfer both the fragility and the law of violence (Butler 2005: 11). This is the common face that people have for "the face transfers what is fragile, the vulnerable, that is human." (ibid: 12). According to Levinas, “the face” is the face of the other, which opens the possibility of witnessing; it is the shocking view of the other. The starting point of morality is not the mind or the will, but the other (Levinas, 1997: 111-124). Levinas, pointing to the vulnerability, emphasizes that one's life depends on the judgment of others. Strangers, the anonymous others we see to be different from ourselves are not just a figure. There is a common bond of vulnerability between us, keeping us responsible for each other's lives. It is "the face of the other" that reminds us of this bond and the responsibility that comes with it. According to Levinas, the other's face tells me that he can be killed. That's precisely why I'm not allowed to kill him. However, the policies that determine which death is worth to be mourned and which life is worth living make us forget our responsibility in relation to the other being killable.

Focusing on the effects of the world war, Benjamin (1995) also reports that wars, genocides, and massacres are common experiences of the twentieth century, creating horror, anxiety and melancholy on the social level (Benjamin, 1995 and Kalaycı, 2014: 209). Hereby, Benjamin is as pessimistic as possible about the situation. According to him, these experiences – as terrible as they are – cannot be transferred. Therefore, these processes have many negative consequences such as grief, fear, anxiety, anger, obsession, complex, paranoia, melancholy, on both the individual and social level (Kalaycı: 2014: 200).

Finally, Giorgio Agamben is another author who focuses on loss, mourning and melancholy. Agemben (2001) argues that the state includes certain exceptional groups that fall out of the definition of normative citizenship and that these lives are not accepted as legitimate life. The groups that Butler (2005) defines as precarious and Agamben (2001) as "homo sacer" are the subjects within the nation-state that are excluded from the "normative values" by the state. The

[17] See: Levinas, Emmanuel in Elis Şimşon (2015), “Levinas and Bobby” Cogito: Issue of Animal in Philosophy

losses of these people are not considered a loss, and are therefore not to be mourned. Their legal statues have also been suspended. Therefore, they are not protected by the law.

Those falling outside the category of the normative subject are being constructed as dangerous others and become the target of the security regime. These communities are seen to be dispensable by the regime and are perceived as threats directed towards the existence of 'us,' a group consisting of subjects with protection privileges. This is how the way for depriving their “worthless lives” of the security and the rights is paved. Within the framework of these theories, I will consider the PKK guerrillas who have lost their lives in the 1990s but whose bodies were not allowed by the state to be "properly" buried, to be this kind of fragile group. Moreover, the state's practice of prohibiting guerrilla mourning in the public domain is still ongoing. In the last two years, dozens of Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) deputies have been targeted with the terrorism charges on the grounds that they took part in guerrilla funerals.[18] Participation in a guerrilla funeral still remains to be a criminal offense.

I will also discuss the hierarchy of mourning based on alienation, ignoring, and neglect through the practices of the state in the 1990s, aimed at those who have lost their lives. Whose loss in Kurdistan is not considered a loss? Who can be mourned about in Kurdistan and who cannot? What are the factors that determine whether loss is considered a loss or not? By whom, and how is the mourning hierarchy established? What are the consequences of this alienation / ignoring / neglect? How is the state able to reproduce exclusivist insights in Kurdistan? Such policies may exclude a person from the field of law or representation. By marking someone inhuman or out of the normative order, these discursive strategies of the state can convince us that some lives are less valuable than others.

As I mentioned above, I will refer to the practice of mourning in Kurdistan in the framework of these theories. However, I would like to point out that I will approach these theories critically from two perspectives. First of all, it is possible to see a general pessimism in all of these contemporary philosophers, although they express that it is possible to share a common ground where those excluded from the state, who are fragile and vulnerable, can come together.

[18] http: / / www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr / hdpliler-pkkli-cenazesinde-146731h.htm [access date 07.06.2017]

In this view, there is little hope for the creation of a resistance that would challenge "national sovereignty." This hopelessness and pessimism reinforce the power of "national sovereignty" to remain in control. Does what is precarious have to remain at the limits of "national sovereignty?" Benjamin (1995) and Agamben (2001) are similarly pessimistic. They do not talk about a line of resistance against sovereignty that produces normative values and pushes certain lives out of it. However, the resistance of precarious groups in Argentina, to which the law remains indifferent, played an important role in bringing justice and democracy to the country (source citation needed). Likewise, in Kurdistan, precarious groups exposed to all kinds of state violence show resistance even though their legal status is *de facto* suspended. Even though they are subjected to a mourning hierarchy, they create a resistance precisely through mourning, as I will show later on.

Moreover, this thesis shows that the deceased do not take part in the presumptuous forms of memory of the living, and that keeping the memory of the dead in the memories of the living does not only lead to "melancholy". In this research, focusing on different forms of grieving practice in Kurdistan, I will argue that it is not only a closure that is shaped around loss and melancholy, nor an interruption of life, nor an experience that only pushes subjects to pessimism. As a matter of fact, the long mourning caused by the inappropriate burial of "the one who died inappropriately" (Kalaycı, 2014) and the struggle developing around it constitutes a line of resistance. Moreover, this resistance is not only effected by pain, sorrow and melancholy, as I will show in the following parts. Although the practices the state has developed against "inappropriate death" deeply affect the memories of those who suffer from the loss, one of the most important situations I encountered during the research is that the subjects participating in the struggle are sometimes cheerful. The practices that take place in martyr cemeteries, where the mourning takes place, do not necessarily lead to pain, sorrow and sadness.

From time to time, this place can turn into a place where everyday practices continue. I will discuss the possibilities that lead to this in the section where I talk about the martyrs in Lice and Dersim, in the context of the narratives of the interviewees. In addition, it is difficult to talk about a homogeneous, permanent-stable and strong community in the form of a "mourning group" in the case of this group that is connected to the Kurdish movement, depending on grief and death / loss.

It is not possible to categorize the group members associated with lost and mourning, often under a coherent identity or a particular frame of subject.

2.1.2. In the Pursuit of Justice: Testimonies

On the other hand, historiography based on testimonies of the 1960s and 70s in Latin America (especially in Argentina) will be another reference of this work. Similar to the war in Kurdistan since the 1990s, this literature emerging around mourning and memory in countries where state violence is intensively experienced depends on testimonies and the struggle for justice built around the "never again" slogan. As it can be seen in the article by Antonius C.G.M. Robben (2005), focusing on the "dirty war" in Argentina, this process has great similarities with the practices of the groups in the struggle for rights in Kurdistan.

In addition, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity* by Yael Navaro (2012), that discusses the affective relationship between human and non-human entities in the space, and the effects of the postwar environment on the people, will be another reference in this thesis, as I will be examining the sentiments and practices of the martyrs that bring about an extraordinary place, embodied in the space of mourning and memory. In her study, Navaro focuses on how the remains of Greek Cypriots (ruins and personal objects) penetrate the lives / minds of the Turks of Northern Cyprus. I will focus on the story of the second important part of this work, the "martyrdoms", where I will refer to Navaro's book. Finally, I will use the researches generally based on witnesses in the last 15-20 years, on what has happened in Kurdistan in the 1990s.

2.1.3. Literature on Kurds and Kurdish Society

The hegemonic knowledge produced about Kurdistan in the last hundred years is the knowledge shaped by the ideological discourse of the state. In the Ottoman state archives, this knowledge was shaped around the ruling practices and strategies that the Empire had applied to Kurdistan. Similarly, in the first years of the Republic, this knowledge was produced within the framework of the state's legitimization of its governing policies in Kurdistan. However, the knowledge emerging in this period is two-sided. While a part of this literature is based on the reports (see Saygı, 2007), which have been formed around the politics that the government puts into force, it

is also the knowledge produced by the social scientists such as Ziya Gökalp that significantly affected the institutionalization of the Kemalist ideology.

As a matter of fact, the work titled "Principles of Turkism" written by Gökalp (1920), aiming to create a homogeneous national identity based on Turkishness, is an attempt to prove that the Kurds are "scientifically" Turkish. Along with this literature which directly serves the formation of the nation-state and consolidation of its policies, the Orientalist discourse[19] (Said, 1978) that was othering the Kurds, silencing and even humiliating the subjects dominated literature on Kurds and Kurdistan up to 2000s. As a result, this literature ignored the subjects of Kurdistan while producing knowledge about them. As of 2000s, this hegemonic literature began to be criticized. In particular, a new generation of educated Kurdish youth affected by post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said, Spivak, Chakrabarty, and others began to produce knowledge against it.

2.1.4. In Search for the Truth: Stories of the Witness and Resistance Memory

In recent years, a new Kurdish literature on Kurdistan in the 1990s has emerged. Many of these studies are based on the testimony of people subjected to state violence, gathered with the oral history method. This literature will be considered in the context of the strategies and mourning practices developed by subjects to deal with these losses and state violence, along with the interviews made within the scope of the research.

The new body of literature consists of works based on testimony such as *Bildiğin Gibi Değil* (Not Like You Know It, Akın and Danışman, 2012) and *Lice* (Cantekin, 2016), and books compiling writings on the 90s such as "İsyan, Şiddet, Yas" (Resistance, Violence and Mourning, Uysal, 2016) and *"*Doksanlar'da Kürtler ve Kürdistan*"* (Kurds and Kurdistan in the 1990s, Işık, Önen, Baykuş ve Bilmez 2015). Again, Tuplum ve Kuram (Society and Theory Journal) which brings together knowledge on Kurdish issues and Kurdistan since 2009, will be an important reference to this research. The journal brought together a new generation of Kurdish youth, influenced by post-colonial theorists such as Said, Spivak, and Chakrabarty. The journal both criticizes the academy's

[19] The concept through which Europe (or the West) refers to the hegemonic forms of the "oriental" cultures' and societies' "underdeveloped" and "traditional" representations, in order to establish itself as "modern" and "developed."

indifference to Kurds and Kurdistan, and argues that the knowledge about Kurdistan has been produced for the western audience, while the Kurds were muted in this process. For this reason, the journal soon became a medium in which new Kurdish studies, shaped around post-colonial theory, came about. This literature sheds light on the state violence of the 90's and the resistance against it (Işık, 2009; 2012; 2014; Çelik, 2011; 2012; 2014; 2016; Göral, 2010; 2013; 2014; 2016; Akkaya and Jongerden 2009; 2014; Jongerden and Şimşek 2015). In this respect, the 9th issue of the journal titled "Hakikat ve Adaletin İzin'de 90'ları Hatırlamak" (Remembering the 90s through Truth and Justice), which focuses on the 90s, and the 10th issue titled "Kürdistan'da Doksanlar: Şiddet, Direniş ve Hakikat" (Nineties in Kurdistan: Violence, Resistance and Truth) will be among the important sources of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on participant observation and oral history interviews. The research areas are the Kurdish-majority provinces of Diyarbakır and Dersim. This research is based on in-depth interviews with the first-degree relatives of the guerrillas buried in Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery in Lice district of Diyarbakır and those of the ones buried in Besê and Dr. Baran Cemetery in Dersim, and with the workers and the visitors of these cemeteries. It is based on participant observation, which is the basic method of anthropology. The main fieldwork of this ethnographic survey was conducted between June 2016 and October 2016. However, as I shall later explain, the visits and interviews that I have conducted before and after this date are also an important part of the field research process.

A total of 16 interviews has been conducted within the scope of the research. All of these interviews are based on the in-depth oral history method. Three of these interviews were conducted out of the period between June 2015 and October 2016, when I conducted field research. I conducted the interview with Ruken, whose father became martyr on December 2015 when I started thinking about the research. Another one is the interview I had with Fatma, member of MEYA-DER (Mesopotamia Assistance and Solidarity for Families with Lost Relatives), in March 2016. The last interview I had with Yılmaz, a MEYA-DER member, in May 2017 after I started writing the thesis. However, my participant observation was June 2016 and December 2016. I conducted interviews with eight people who are relatives of martyrs in Diyarbakır and three in Dersimduring this period. Other interviewees are not relatives of guerillas who were buried in these two cemeteries. One of them worked in the construction of *Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery* for 3 months in Lice. Two other interviewees are members of MEYA-DER. In addition to these, I also interviewed three persons in Dersim who worked in martyr cemeteries during the construction of *Besê and Dr. Baran Cemetery.* They were in-depth, semi-structured, open ended oral history interviews. Last interviewee I conducted in Dersim was with a person whose grandparents were murdered in the Dersim Massacre in 1938.

3.1. Fieldwork

I went to Diyarbakır in June 2016. First, I visited the MEYA-DER directors and the Peace Mothers (*Barış Anneleri*) who I had met before and told them about my research. They asked me about the results of the research I had done earlier. On my second visit, I had with me the Sur report with the HDP, which made me confident and increased the relation of trust with my interlocutors.

When I told MEYA-DER members about my research, one of them said: "We are fed up with this, everybody is handing us a microphone." I knew that this answer was a rebuke rather than a turn down, but I was also aware of the fact that it was not going to be easy to talk to people who were tired of talking with researchers. I laughed and said, "You talk to everybody so you have to talk to me, too." I actually meant to say, "You have been talking to several "foreigners" for years, but I am one of you, I deserve talking to you a lot more."[20] I did not have any interviews in the first few days, but I went to MEYA-DER every day. I had access to all of the interviewees via MEYA-DER, which has all of the information of the relatives of the missing people. After we talked about the group I wanted to talk to, we created a list of people I could meet with. After that, these individuals were called in order each day and they were told that I wanted to meet with them. So I started to have pre-interviews. After I had already had a few interviews, I would have met most of the people I intended to interview, which gave both me and them the confidence to continue working together.

When I was preparing my questions, I created a two-step question list. I focused on the story of the martyr in the first stage, and the story of the martyrdom sites in the second stage. In the martyr's story, I focused on questions such as childhood, first years of youth, educational period, the process of joining the PKK, and how long they had remained a guerrilla, and how they has lost their life, and about their relationship with their family. I also asked them why they did not get the funeral after they lost their lives, and why they brought them to the martyrs cemetery after years. The family members' attitude to the martyrs' life came to light in this part. In the second part, I focused

[20] I will talk more about how my personal position affects the research in the "Positionality and Reaction to Research" section.

on the story of the establishment and destruction of martyrdom sites. I focused on what that meant for the demolition of the martyrdom sites as a memorial site established by the PKK guerrillas for their fallen comrades.

As I mentioned above, I divided my interviewees into two categories: first, the relatives of the people buried in the cemetery, and second, the ones who are not the relatives of the people buried in the cemetery. I had a total of 16 interviews with people from both of these categories. The first category consisted of first-degree relatives of the PKK guerillas who lost their lives in the 1990s and were buried wherever they died - in the land-, and were brought to the guerilla cemeteries built in Lice and Dersim by the PKK guerillas since 2013, the ceasefire period. In this category, I interviewed a total of 7 relatives, including a martyr's daughter, a martyr's wife, two martyrs' mothers, a martyr's sister, and two martyrs' brothers, who are the relatives of the guerillas buried in Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery. The relatives of the guerrillas buried in Besê and Dr. Baran Cemetery whom I interviewed were two mothers and a father whose daughters became martyrs, and two men whose brothers became martyrs. In this category, I also met two people in Dersim who brought to the cemetery the bones of their relative who had lost his life in Dersim genocide in 1938. It was much harder to reach the families in Dersim. Since the families of the three guerrillas buried in Dersim lived in Diyarbakır, I had to meet them there. In addition to these, I met two members of MEYA-DER in Diyarbakır. I also met a person working in the construction of the Lice martyrdom sites in Diyarbakır. I also interviewed two young women who were working there when the Dersim martyrdom sites was being built. I interviewed them at the same time because they were close friends and they were visiting there together at the same time. Finally, I interviewed a person in Dersim who has been visiting the site continuously, and who was among the early staff of the PKK. I had four of the interviews in Diyarbakır at MEYA-DER. I had one at the Association of Mothers for Peace and had the rest at the interviewees' homes. I met with three of the interviewees whose relatives are buried in Dersim in Diyarbakır, with one of them at Mala Gel (People's House)[21]), with one at a café, and with the last one at their house. I had one interview in Ovacık, Dersim, at the house of the interviewee. I had three of the interviews in DBP's (Democratic Regions Party) provincial building, and two of them at the workplaces of the people

[21] a local administrative building

I interviewed. The interviews lasted about 1-3 hours. I had a list of questions with me, but the interview process was mostly shaped by their narration, and my curiosity and questions.

3.1.1. Security Issue in Fieldwork

During my research and interviews, I was not afraid for my own safety but I was afraid that my interviewees may get harmed. The slightest harm I would give to these people, who showed me their deepest wounds, would cause a lifelong sorrow in my heart. For this reason, I was as cautious as possible. First, I hardly ever carried the question sheet with me. I did not write the questions as they were when I determined them. It was an encoded question sheet on which I put small marks reminding me of the questions. I noted only the first letters of the interviewees' names. Sometimes I did not even ask the names of the interviewees, since I feared that even me knowing their name might cause me to hurt them. I spoke to very few people over the phone. Some of the members of the MEYA-DER made phone calls with the families so I could meet them face-to-face. I explained about my research during the first meetings. Most of these interlocutors showed that they were not willing to talk. That is why I interviewed most of my interlocutors the second time we met. The first meeting was in order for them to get to know me and trust me. I generally did not save the interviewees' phone numbers on the phone. I often did not take notes during the interviews, and sometimes I only took notes that only I could understand. I had the voice recordings on the telephone and I transferred them to a digital format as soon as the interview was over and deleted them in front of my interlocutors before leaving. When I asked for permission to record, I indicated that I would delete the audio recordings after transcription. It was also effective that I asked for permission. I kept these records neither at home nor on my own computer. I left a copy of the interview in digital format, and another copy on external disc and stored it in a safe place. I repeated this process after all the interviews. I also used pseudonyms for all my interviewees, about which I informed them. This proved to be an effective way of gaining their trust. I was asking whether they would like to choose pseudonyms for themselves, but only a few of the interviewees chose a name, so I decided on the names of the others myself. After recording interviews, I could not do transcription due to the security problem. I did transcriptions myself after I finished my fieldwork.

3.2. Oral History, Subjectivity and Temporal Dimension

The "truth" of great tragedies that could not have come to light in the official history books and in the academy that the state keeps under constant control,[22] has nevertheless forced its way into the hegemonic literature by the way of oral history. Interestingly, in a short time it has found an important place in academy as well. The fact that the actors of major catastrophes that deeply hurt the memories of the subjects have not been revealed for many years, is a very important factor in verbal witnesses' becoming "legitimate" and sometimes even "determinative" (Sarlo, 2005) sources of information in the last 20-30 years. For this reason, public, political, and emotional testimonies have become an important reference for "reparation of a bruised identity" as a result of the "confidence in the immediacy of the voice (ibid.: 17)."

3.2.1. Tracing the Past: Oral History

Oral history enables the transfer of personal experience to the social / political arena while it evokes the memories and moves the past to the present. In terms of my field, oral history had particular significance for understanding how people remember the traumatic past. Oral history, which transfers past "events" to the present through personal memory, has now an important place in social sciences, but in many respects, it is still a matter of debate in terms of the methods it uses and the reliability of the knowledge it produces. The question of subject and subjectivity, are important in attributing value to testimonies and are considered as an important part of research in oral history. The first issue in oral history is "to reconstruct the truth by placing it in the memory of experience" (Sarlo, 2005: 17). In other words, it is a question arising from the description of this past from the perspective of the first person-singular. According to this, since the subject is necessarily under the influence of today's political, ethical, and emotional conditions, the past transferred to today cannot be freed from these influences. Accordingly, the historiography based on the witness accounts is shaped according to current needs, and, "so a certain type of tone has been added to the past landscapes", as put by Sarlo (ibid: 17). The second problem is "the danger of reducing its complexity desired to be reconstructed for the sake of comprehending the past" (ibid: 16). The third problem is related to the reliability of the knowledge produced in this way,

[22] That is because from the Armenian genocide to the Holocaust, from violence in Latin America to Kurdistan, the actor of these tragedies has been the state itself.

again in relation to the first problem. This is problematized in the following ways: "How reliable is the memory in the first person in capturing the meaning of the experience" (ibid: 35)? How close is the transferred experience to the reality? What is the relation of the produced knowledge with the truth when the subject refers to the past by means of remembering and recollection? Sarlo summarizes this criticism as follows:

> The past is recalled, told about; or the past is referred to when people talk about stories either intentionally or unintentionally, publicly or secretly, for certain purposes or unconsciously through actions. (ibid: 12)

According to Walter Benjamin who witnessed the World War I, it is not possible for subjects to transfer it because of the uniqueness of the experience of trauma. Thus, the narrative itself, which is the basic method of oral history, becomes problematic. Benjamin (2006) suggests that subjects are "inarticulate" because of the shock created by technology and war. According to him, there is a great distance between the narrative and the experience. According to him, the stories that are claimed to be related to World War I have nothing to do with the experience of the war: “What was ten years later poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from mouth to mouth” (Benjamin, 2006: 362).[23] This melancholic voice of Benjamin reminds us of the following words of Theodor W. Adorno: " There can be no poetry after Auschwitz " (1951)[24] and conveys the message that it is impossible to transfer the experience of disaster.

However, there are some points that these approaches ignore. The first is the fact that in the geographies where recollection is perceived as a task, it is the personal witnesses that makes it possible to determine justice – even at a certain distance. Indeed, after the military dictatorship in Argentina, it was due to the witnesses that the state terrorism could be condemned (Stevo 2005: 18). In addition, given the argument that the history is written by the powerful, other criticisms put forward lose their justification. Hence, the problem of objectivity can not be discussed only on the basis of the limitations of first person-singular narrative, because the formal writing of history

[23] http: / / ada.evergreen.edu / ~arunc / texts / frankfurt / storyteller.pdf [access date 21.06.2017]
[24]https: / / books.google.com.tr / books?id=nMd67tJAwuEC&pg=PR16&lpg=PR16&dq=Theodor+W.+Adorno,+%22after+Auschwitz,+poetry+could+no+longer+be+written%22&source=bl&ots=PjPgxLe3ll&sig=RUPx2FLKHI59UT_D09p8Q7dyQ3w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwigptDR9ZrVAhXEB5oKHT0zCX0Q6AEIKjAB#v=onepage&q=Theodor%20W.%20Adorno%2C%20%22after%20Auschwitz%2C%20poetry%20could%20no%20longer%20be%20written%22&f=false [access date 21.06.2017]

without first person-singular is under the direct influence of hegemonic discourse. As Anderson (1983) suggests, the social memory is constantly and systematically bombed by the formal and ideological myths of the state. Similarly, how can we suggest that formal history is not fictional, as Hobsbawm (1983) argues, if tradition is invented by certain authorities (which are often nation-states)?

Moreover, how can formal history, which is completely excluded from the right to life and subjectivity and which does not answer almost any question about the past, be reliable in terms of subjects? In addition, is it possible to talk about the process of knowledge production independent of political imagination? How can personal rights and justice be defined by the silence of the subjects in the face of "the severity / uniqueness of the disaster"? When all these reasons are taken into account, it can be asserted that the oral history opens up a field for the designation of rights of certain groups (which are often exposed to violence, whose experiences and voices are pushed outside the public sphere and "whose existences are completely ignored" (Assmann, 2015: 15).

When the losses in Kurdistan, especially in the last 30 years, are taken into account, the narratives of the first-degree witnesses are of crucial importance in order for the violence to come to light. The witness accounts are very important not only for the establishment of justice in Kurdistan, but also for the formation of a new collective memory, as we have seen in the case of Argentina and Spain (Robben, 2005, Sosa, 2009 and Zoe, 2017). In this context, it is unreasonable to discuss the transferred experience in terms of reality and fiction. What is important here is how the ways in which the subjects interpret their subjective experiences influence the collective memory; “memory speaks from today” (Passerini, 1998, 29) but this does not cause the narrative to the lose their value. As a matter of fact, it is not the direct aim of this research to reveal the answer to the question "What has happened in Kurdistan in the 90s?" The question "How do the subjects who have witnessed what happened in Kurdistan in the 90s make sense of their experience and how do they transmit it?" is a more fundamental problem for this research.

For this reason, interviews were conducted taking into account the ways in which the interviewees conveyed their testimonies and experiences, the language they used, the way in which they narrated and the flow of narrative, and the way in which they conveyed meaning and experience. Alessandro Portelli argues that, “as the term itself implies, oral history is a specific form of

discourse: history evokes a narrative of the past, and oral indicates a medium of expression" (1998, 23). For this reason, the fact that the narrative - unavoidably - has been constructed in / under the effect of a specific discourse does not cause the narrative to lose its value.

On the other hand, Pollock defines oral history as a testimonial literature and a performative process that occurs within a certain time and space, in which the researcher is also involved (2008, 128). In this sense, the result of the opening up of the researcher to the oral history subjects is a reflexivity process in which different memories are shared during the interviews.

This research, based on the oral history method, is also a qualitative research grounded in participatory observation and in-depth interviews. As mentioned earlier, interviewees are divided into two categories. In the first category, there are the relatives of the guerillas buried in Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery located in the district of Lice of Diyarbakır and Besê and Dr. Baran Cemetery. The narratives of interviewees in this group focused on the portraits of the disappeared in the form of a historical chronology. For example, Rihan told what had happened from the beginning till the end like a film. She spoke in an order without being asked questions, how and when his son Yilmaz joined the guerilla, on what conditions he went, what he went through before he left, and how he communicated with him afterwards she offered his testimony in great detail. In a nutshell, it is often a three-stage narrative of the relatives of guerrillas who lost their lives. The first stage focuses on the portraits of the guerrillas, while in the second stage they focused on the experiences and testimonies of the relatives who witnessed this process which corresponds to their mourning experience. In the third stage, the construction of the guerrilla cemeteries was in the focus of the stories; in this section interviewees conveyed their feelings and experiences of building and destruction.

The second group of interviewees were those who worked in and / or visited the guerrilla cemeteries.[25] The narratives of people in this category focused more on what is actual. Rather than remembering what was prevalent in the past, it was about telling the experience they had recently experienced. For this reason, stopping at some point, remembering, and the frequency of returning were occurring less comparing to the relatives of the guerillas who lost their lives.

[25] Most of these people (except the three women I interviewed in Dersim) are close relatives of guerrillas who lost their lives but buried in places other than these two cemeteries.

3.3. Contested Meaning and Connection

Politics of naming was one of my concern while preparing the interview questions. I was hesitant to use “martyr” although the word has been used commonly. Cambridge dictionary defines martyr as “a person who suffers very much or is killed because of their religious or political beliefs.”[26] As a matter of fact, martyr is widely used not only by relatives whom I interviewed but also bymany Kurds (?). On the other hand, Turkey is already under the "siege of martyrdom myth". “Today, the things and the experiences that are said to be associated with martyrdom can be described as a kind of insanity that has spread throughout the country and has never seen in the Cold War period of Turkey " (Semercioğlu, 2014: 13). However, it is not new that the martyrdom myth is used as an important instrument of militarism by the state itself. In addition, the usage of martyrdom in Turkey is expanding into everyday realm such as in "football martyrs", "mine martyrs" and "martyrs of 15 July". In monotheistic religions such as Islam, Christianity and Judaism, martyrdom is the most meaningful and the highest order of death. As this indicates, there are different variants of this myth in Turkey, from the one used by Sunnis to those of Alevis, from left wing groups[27] to the right wing. Is it that if everyone calls their dead “martyrs” it makes Turkey "the country of martyrs"[28] ? How can both Turkish soldiers killed by the PKK guerrillas and the PKK guerrillas killed by Turkish soldiers become martyrs? Who are the real martyrs? Those who were killed as they fought for the law or those who were killed because they fought against the law? What does the real martyr mean? Why do the Kurds use the same conceptual tool that the state uses to mobilize nationalist and conservative masses? Where does the legitimacy of how the "non-citizens" have an understanding of death come from, as Agamben puts it (2005). What does martyrdom mean for these "precarious groups" lacking a grave to visit for years? What does it mean to call “martyr” those whose dead bodies are kept exposed and not worthy of being mourned? As a result, the concept of martyrdom constituted an important part of my research.

Another challenge I witnessed was about the meaning of the term family, especially when I put “family” and “martyr” together while I was trying to define my interviewees. Is there such a homogeneous group? In the context of Turkey where different ideologies are formed around the

[26] http: / / dictionary.cambridge.org / dictionary / english / belief [access date 21.06.2017]
[27] Those who lost their lives in the nationwide “Gezi” uprisings in 2013 are called Gezi Martyrs, for example.
[28] Current Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan uses this expression quite often.

idea of martyrdom, which group do the "families of the martyrs" correspond to? Judith Butler's book “Precarious Life” can be read in terms of "re-conceiving the community on the basis of injury and loss" (Butler, 2005: 35). Does precarity create a common space for Kurds? Can we define them as a mourning group? In the book “The Unavowable Community”, Maurice Blanchot describes how people come together and stand quietly after the massacre in Algerian train station for the independence of Algeria on February 8, 1962 (2006: 47). According to Blanchot, this community emerged for the Algerians whose lives had been made precarious and had been murdered. However, it does not constitute a permanent structure as people united and then disunited for the purpose of mourning, which points to the fact that the community itself is precarious. Can we accept the families of the guerrillas who lost their lives in Kurdistan in the 90s but were not "appropriately" buried, as such a community? Does this group of people come together only to mourn or gathers around the idea of mourning? Is their common ground only mourning? Then these are the kind of people whose everyday lives are interrupted, who are only mourning. But since they are not temporary groups that come together, do the groups that constantly mourn lose their quality of being precarious? Besides, can it be said that the war that has been going on in Kurdistan for 40 years has only been shaped around the mourning experience? In fact, mourning experience will be necessarily transferred to the future generations. If the mourning is the only common ground, how does the continuous practice of mourning imprison one’s life into melancholy, closing it to the outside world, and making grief and hopelessness affect resistance? Is it possible to talk about a continuing practice of mourning, such as the supposed "mourning groups"? Taking all these questions and literature on mourning into consideration, the meaning of mourning in Kurdistan, and the mourning practices and their relationship with the resistance have become the most important parts of my research.

Finally, I started this research by assuming that martyrdom sites constitute a collective memory in Kurdish society. I thought that the reason for this came from the affect in these spaces. Moreover, I have argued that it is not only negative emotions that originate from grief and pain, but also an emotion accompanied by hope, belief and even cheerfulness. For this reason, these emotions became another focus of the study of the martyrdom sites around which the collective memory was built. What is the difference between this collective memory and the collective memory built by the nation state through its own martyrdom sites discourse, monuments, and museums? What is the difference between practices experienced here and the practices organized by the state?

Taking Yeal Navaro's notion of the "sense of space" into consideration, what is the sentiment of Kurds' martyrdom sites?

3.4. Positionality and Reaction to Research

In this section, I would like to concentrate on positionality of the researcher and the interviewee that always influences deeply the research process. I was not sure if it was possible to research such a sensitive and "dangerous" subject before I started the fieldwork. However, I neither wanted to change my topic nor wanted to abandon the plan to do a field research, so I started with great anxiety about the fieldwork. What I was afraid of was not just my own security, but rather the possibility of harming the people I interviewed. Also, as a young researcher, I went to the field with the doubt whether I would be considered an expert by my interlocutors. However, I did not encounter any serious problems in the field. In fact, on the contrary, I felt strong and self-confident. Of course, this was directly related to the advantages I had in the field.

The research I conducted with three friends of mine on urban transformation in Sur was one of the most important advantages. This experience saved me many problems in the field. In that period of research, I had the chance to get to know both Diyarbakır and the Kurdish political movement closer than I ever have, and it also motivated me to visit there quite often because I was a member of a foundation in Diyarbakır. This experience gave me confidence in the field. In addition, three months before I started the research, I interviewed the families of those who lost their lives in the Sur resistance within the scope of the research for the Sur report prepared by the HDP, which is why I was familiar with the field.

Another advantage was that I was an advisor to an HDP Diyarbakır MP, which provided me a two-sided advantage. The first one was that it enabled me to look at things from the "inside." Being an insider is not just equivalent to being a Kurd. Although my Kurdish identity provided great advantages in this research, it was me being the "patriotic Kurd" that made me an "insider" in the field. Working for the HDP implicitly gave these messages to the interviewees. This was an important factor for them trusting me and opening up to me. In addition, the fact that the institution employees, such as the MEYA-DER and the Peace Mothers employees I have interviewed, have known and been working with my advisee MP made them care more for our relationships. This

"strong" reference created their confidence to talk to me. Even if I did not tell the interviewees that I was working with her, it was MEYA-DER, which dominates the field of Kurdish research, that created a secure space for me and my research. The only negative aspect of my relations with my interlocutors that does not adversely affect my research but disturbs me is the fact that a person I know from the research asked me to find a scholarship for his son. I felt embarrassed because I could not find a scholarship for him, and soon our communication was cut off. Along with all of this, that fact that I speak advanced Kurdish is the most important factor that facilitated the research. I had conducted all of my interviews in Diyarbakir in Kurdish. However, since I do not know the Zazaki dialect of Kurdish spoken in Dersim and all the interviewees knew Turkish, I conducted all the interviews with Dersimlies in Turkish.

After I started conducting interviews, my concerns about security decreased. But the stories I listened to were very emotionally intense. When I returned home in the evening, the weight of the things I heard prevented me from thinking about them again. I also felt that it was still dangerous to write thoughts and feelings about the interviews, even though my security concerns decreased. For this reason, I have hardly ever written during the time I was in the field. I did not do the transcriptions for the same reasons. However, after each interview, I examined and revised the questions. Immediately after I returned from the field, I began to do the transcriptions.

I was also constantly talking about the field experience and the content of the interviews with a few friends of mine in Diyarbakır. Even talking about these issues is very difficult nowadays in Diyarbakır. The announcement that the clashes have ceased in Sur in March 2016 was made by the state authorities, but the restricted movement still continued in the previous war zones. Diyarbakır, which was dominated by the noise of clashes during the winter and witnessed the death of dozens of people in the spring, retreated into a deadly silence. No one wanted to talk about the war and losses. Sometimes people were silent in a deep mood when the temperature reached 50 degrees. Those who witnessed hundreds of losses were extremely melancholic. Everyone had a relative, friend, and / or acquaintance who died in Sur. Although the fact that the resistance lasted for 103 days later brought about the stories of heroism, no one had the strength to talk right after the clashes. Moreover, everything had happened in front of their eyes. The whole city was in deep sorrow thinking about how they could not help preventing these losses.

I was in the same mood as I had been traveling to this place a year before starting my research. Like many others, I did not go to Sur all summer. This place had become a symbol representing the darkness which had fallen upon everyone in Kurdistan. With time, I became alienated from my research in this city where everyone was silently mourning. Does it matter that the martyrdom sites sites were bombed in the time when the city centers, the towns the Kurdish cities became an open grave? In the process where Taybet Ana's[29] body was kept in the streets of Silopi for days, who remembered the ones stayed in the streets without being buried in the 90s? Who was thinking about the ones who died in unsolved murders in the 90s when hundreds of people were burned alive in the Cizre "savagery basements?"[30] During my research, I was always accompanied by sadness together with these questions. However, I realized that there was not a pain hierarchy when it comes to loss, unlike I thought during my interviews. What happened was terrible, but in the 90s the same terrible events had taken place, and those who suffered loss carried them - in their memories and hearts. Those experienced today did not hide the savagery of the things experienced in 90s, but instead pointed to the continuity of state violence in Kurdistan. For them, there was no difference between the bombing of the martyrs and the bombing of the living. Yıldız expressed this in the following way:

> The things experienced in Sur, Cizre, İdil, Yüksekova, and Nusaybin did not differ from the bombing of the martyrs. There have been massacres like never before. True, but these places were also places of martyrdom sites . They lost their lives, and their grave stones and lands were bombed. (Yıldız)

Some of the interviews did not progress in the form of questions and answers. The interviewees – perhaps because I have revealed the goal of my research before the interviews – have told about the story of both the martyr and martyrdom sites at length. While I listened to the interviews, they flashed before my eyes like a movie scene. I thought it was absolutely necessary to record what I listened to. Almost all of the interviewees cried during the interviews. I offered them to end the interview. But none of them accepted and they continued to talk. I felt bad because I reminded them of bad memories. But they did not think so. Dayîka Rihan (Mother Rihan) told about her suffering turning into a form of rebellion as follows:

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[29] The corpse of 57-year-old Taybet Inan was left on the street for 7 days due to the curfew. https: / / server.nostate.net / 325-new / html / wp-content / uploads / 2016 / 01 / KJA-Report-on-the-conflict-process-political-situation-and-women-in-Kurdistan.pdf [access date 21.06.2017]

[30] Şırnak MP Faisal Sarıyıldız, who witnessed the deaths of those who stayed in the basements in Cizre, used this expression to describe what happened.

> No, may my heart not hurt. My heart turned black in my everlasting pain, just let it remain in pain. The police said to me, "You have no heart?" I said, "no it's all stone, stone." "How is your heart aching?" "Doesn't your heart hurt." I said, "no it doesn't", "Why," he asked, "it turned into stone, stone doesn't know about pain." I answered. "For how many years" he asked, "it's been for 9 years," I said "How come 9 years?" he asked. "I have not seen him for 9 years". "When I saw him, you did not give him to me ... my heart hurt so badly that it turned into stone, no more pain..." "For god's sake!" he said.

It made them happy that I witnessed the story of their loved ones and accompanied them at their suffering. More importantly, it made them so happy that I was going to write about their pain because they thought that everyone had to know about it, everyone had to learn about what had happened. Those expectations also brought me closer to them. In this sense, I had chance to witnessed all the process of the constructions and destruction of martyrdoms sites. This period also corresponds to the beginning and the ending of ceasefire between Turkish and PKK. My position, ethnic identity and ability (in particularly being Kurdish speaker) made possible to study in that period both during the ceasefire and in the conflicts. This research, which is the unique experience, is important in terms of contributing to the literature in this respect.

3.4.1. Research Process

In July 2015, when I had a clear idea of my research, I visited Besê and Dr. Baran Cemetery located in Dersim. The ceasefire declared by the PKK was still in place and everyone hoped that negotiations would begin. I stayed one week in Dersim. During this week, I visited the martyrdom site on Nazimiye road three times. The days I visited, I spent all day there. The purpose of these visits was to understand the conditions of this research. I did not conduct any recorder interviews in Dersim in 2015. This was a preliminary research for me and I was planning to return to Dersim soon afterwards and to have interviews with the families of the guerrillas who were buried in this martyrdom sites, and those who came to visit here. I have been constantly chatting with these people, trying to understand why they came there, what this cemetery meant to them, and what effect this cemetery had on them. Before I left Dersim, I had the feeling that I would never be able to go to a martyrdom sites again. Some of my friends who had been going there recently warned me to be careful before I went to Dersim form Diyarbakır. According to the information I received from them, some "dark / contra" forces started to move around at night in Dersim. When I was there, there was no extraordinary situation other than routine road check-ups. There was a period

ahead of me to prepare proposal for the thesis and to determine the thesis jury, but in those days, like many people, I felt like the war would break out any time. I was afraid that I would never be able to go to these places again. For this reason, I wanted to do interviews as soon as possible. However, soon after I returned to Diyarbakır to prepare the question form, a bombing attack was carried out against the youth gathered in Suruç to help Kobani. In this attack, 33 people lost their lives and over 100 people were injured. Two days later, two policemen were killed in Urfa, causing the war to resume. Everyone began to wait for the clashes to begin again, and I could not go to Besê and Dr. Baran Cemetery ever again.

I was conducting a field research on urban transformation with my three friends at the district of Sur in Diyarbakır in July and August 2015, when the war was about to erupt there as well. In the last few days of our fieldwork, small clashes between the police and the YDG-H (Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement) began. In March 2016, I participated in the team of the HDP's report on the clashes in Sur. I could meet the families of the fighters in Sur, because I had done field research in Sur before and because I am an anthropology graduate. These families (mostly mothers) had just lost their children and could not even organize their children's funeral. For this reason, the vast majority of them were on hunger strike, demanding to get the bodies of their children.[31] This research coincided with my thesis in the sense that it provided the recordings of the stories of the people who recently lost their relatives[32]. I carried out this research in the days when the Ministry of Interior announced that the battles were over. Moreover, I was going to meet and interview some people I met here[33] when I was doing the field research. During this two-week field research, I always kept my thesis in mind. This year prior to the thesis field research constitutes an important part of my research.

Since I had conducted the interviews with the people who lost their relatives recently, I took some precautions to avoid security issues in the field. As I mentioned before, the stories are not just about the person who lost their life. This was a serious security concern for my interviewees, because the narrator also explained in detail the process of being associated with the person who was a member of the PKK. These people are dangerous criminals in the eyes of state and thus

[31] https: / / www.amerikaninsesi.com / a / cenazeler-icin-aclik-grevi / 3138850.html [access date 25.06.2017]
[32] For this reason I included an interview I had with a person among senior staff of MEYA-DER in my thesis.
[33] Most of them were members of MEYA-DER and Peace Mothers.

fragile in Butler's words; the "so-called citizens" outside the "legitimate" community life, who do not hold all citizenship rights, as described by Agamben's concept of bare life.[34] Precarious refers to the one who is "uncomfortable, unstable, insecure, revocable, whose future is uncertain", vulnerable, and who it is living at the edge of the temporary employment status (Bora and Erdoğan, 2017: 16).

Moreover, this precarious group has been vulnerable since the 90s. All of these people were people who constantly traveled to martyrdom sites between 2013 and 2015, when the clashes were absent. Although the 90s were a closed case in the eyes of the state, these last connections posed a serious danger to my interlocutors. For the state, their narratives would be a very serious "confession" because they told me things about themselves first-hand. It was crazy to do research in a city like Diyarbakır at a time when there was continuous conflict and fighting going on, there were sudden protests in the streets, riot control vehicles at every corner, and when special forces constantly checks people's identities.

The situation in Dersim was not any different. On the contrary, in Diyarbakır, it was more relaxed as the state suppressed the city resistances. In Dersim, guerrillas constantly raided the security outposts. At the entrance of the city, a troop of soldiers was deployed, searching the vehicles one by one, performing identity checks. The city I had visited a year ago had turned into a completely different place. Before I got there, some time ago, the PKK guerrillas entered the Nazimiye district of Dersim and took control of the district's police station. When I went there, the state forces were preparing for the revenge for this attack.[35] Thus, the area of the Besê and Dr. Baran Cemetery was completely closed. Only the residents of the district could enter and exit there. I stayed in Dersim for about 20 days. I stayed at the hotel the first week, and at the houses of the families I met in the following weeks.[36] I conducted an interview in Ovacık and the other five interviews in the center of Dersim. Access road to Ovacık was at the gate to the center of Dersim, and they were searching people with extraordinary security measures - mobile outpost, special teams wearing face masks with long barreled weapons in their hands. This Dersim was completely different than the Dersim

[34] İlker Başbuğ used the "so-called citizen" concept for the Kurds in 2005.
[35] In the winter and spring of the same year, the state would make severe attacks in Dersim and in these attacks, more than 100 hundred PKK guerillas would lose their lives.
[36] As I visited MEYA-DER, DBP and HDP during the day for interviews, MEYA-DER members and interviewees said that staying alone at teacherage could be dangerous. That's why I started staying in with the families.

where I had come and stayed a year ago. The martyrdom site that hundreds of people had been visiting daily was bombed. Even entering that road was forbidden. The faces of the guerrillas that people have witnessed during the period of ceasefire were now on the edge of the state's barrel. The people of Dersim were experiencing this horror. Moreover, the rumor had it that Dersim was the first city in the target of ISIS after Şengal. Under these circumstances, I had interviews through the connections MEYA-DER in Dersim.

CHAPTER 4

DEATH AND MOURNING

4.1. Death and Mourning in Traditional Kurdish Society

The phenomenon of death is a subject that has been studied extensively in the field of philosophy. In addition, an enormous body of literature on death and death rituals has been created by social sciences and humanities such as anthropology, history, archaeology and psychology. Death has been examined in anthropology, especially in cultural anthropology and forensic anthropology. Cultural anthropology focuses on the perception of death in different cultures and on the rituals during grief process such as the cult of death, while forensic anthropology deals with death biologically. However, topics such as death rituals and burial rituals have been studied in the context of traditional society, not modern society.

Although the perception of death, the way of thinking people have developed about death, death symbols and rituals, burial ceremonies and mourning practices vary enormously between different cultures, "proper" farewell practices for the deceased are performed in all cultures. There are also common practices on death in all societies. Farewell to the dead is a universal practice that takes place in all societies, even though cremation is the farewell practice in some societies. Ozsoy draws attention to this universal principle by expressing that "human" and "to bury" derives from the same origin:

> The word "humanitas" (human) in Latin derives from "humando" (to bury); human means creature that can bury its own dead. There is probably a similar etymological and semantic relationship between "mirin" and "mirov" in the Kurmancî dialect of Kurdish language, and between "merde" and "merdim / mordem" in the Dimilkî dialect. (2012)[37]

Current studies in this area in Turkey are very limited.[38] The literature on death among Kurds is even more limited. It is not possible to find a current study on this subject except for the book Kına ve Ayna: Kürtlerde Ölüm ve İntihar (Henna and Mirror: Death and Suicide among Kurds) by Müslüm Yücel (2003). In this work, Yücel focuses on the position of death and suicide in Kurdish

[37] http: / / politikart1.blogspot.com.tr / 2012 / 05 / arafta-kalmak-tarih-mezarda-baslar.html [access date 13.06.2017]
[38] French Turkologist Jean-Paul Roux studied on cult of death in old Turkish societies in detail.

culture, but it is a literary work rather than an academic research. Moreover, since the place of death in the Kurdish society is not covered by this thesis, I will focus on the rituals during grief process.

Historically, violence has been very persistent in Kurdish community. Tribal conflicts have been experienced throughout the history. Similarly, there has been always conflicts between the ruling states and Kurdish tribes. For instance, there has been a number of Kurdish rebellions in the Ottoman period, and during these rebellions many Kurds lost their lives, so death and mourning have become the most important ritual of the society. The spread of death has effected every aspect of life in Kurdish society. Oral history as a memory of Kurdish culture is constructed by death and narrations around death. Dêngbêj[39] as a traditional Kurdish art-music, demonstrates how death is common in Kurdish society. The songs (kilam) are a kind of melodic word-speech to express the pain that calls up and speaks of individual and social living experiences. The period of violence also created political deaths in the Kurdish society, so the kilams are mostly based on narratives about deaths of heroes. Although the majority of these kilams are about a specific time and character, they articulate violence, ideas about politics, the states, political structure, and the meaning of death in Kurdish society (Hamelink and Barış 2014: 44). There are many songs of dengbêj named *kilamên şer* (war words / songs) which are based on conflicts, and *kilamên ser* (words / songs about) which are based on stories of heroes (Hamelink and Barış 2014; Breteque, 2012). In the traditional society, religion was the main instrument to cope with death. However, it can be said that religion was replaced with the communal memory by the PKK as a part of the state building project. Communal memory as a significant institutional and ideological discourse helps to deal with death in Kurdish society. However, it is still difficult to deal with losses for a society that is constantly experiencing violence and death.

The practices after death such as burial ceremony and condolence are significant in Kurdish society, although they vary in different sects. Sunni Kurds come together to express condolence for three days. This is not a ritual only seen in traditional society. Similarly, it is not a post-mortem practice seen only in Kurdish cities and / or villages. Today, it is a ritual performed also in the

[39] The word dangbêj can be translated as "master of the voice" deng meaning voice and bêj from the verb "to say" (Hamelink and Barış 2014: 34).

western cities such as İstanbul, Mersin, and Ankara. The Kurdish words "serxweşî" (condolence / *taziye*) and "şîn" (grief) are sometimes used interchangeably. The fact that the interviewees used the expression "me ser xweşiya xwe danî" (we gave our condolence) instead of "me şîna xwedanî" (we came together to mourn) is probably due to the importance of condolence in Kurdish society. The next day after a funeral, the relatives of the deceased come together. These people come together in Kurdistan especially in *the houses of mourning* established in the last decade, while in cities they mostly come together in village and district associations. All relatives and acquaintances visit these people for three days. Imams (Muslim priests) are definitely present for the condolence and everyone who comes says the sura al-fatihah (to pray). However, as might be expected, people do not only say prayer here. During the condolence visit, which help people come together, people do not only talk about death and grief, but also talk about daily life. In this sense, it might be interesting, but not wrong, to suggest that condolence visits have the same function as weddings. It is possible to observe the same process in condolence visits for guerrillas.

4.2. Politicization of the Death in Kurdish Society

Although it is not a geographical area with consistent and definite boundaries, based on Kurds being a certain ethnicity / homogeneous nation (as defined by the nation states that have been built in many parts of the world since the 20th century), Kurdistan means a homeland for the Kurds, having a historical and political consciousness and a sense of belonging to the geography-land they live in. However, after the nation states were built in the geographical region where the Kurds lived, their autonomy was completely lost. The Kurdish issue in the last century, with its different aspects and consequences in four different parts separated between Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, has been an ongoing agenda both nationally and internationally. Although the Kurdish issue has been perceived as a security issue and measures have been developed by those states that have suppressed the Kurds, the main source of the matter are the status claims clearly made by the Kurds in the last century.

The fact that the Kurdish issue, which is basically based on the issue of a distinct status, has not been solved, caused the Kurds, who have been forced to assimilate and repressed under the nationalist, sectarian and repressive sovereignty of different nation states, to carry on a continuing resistance and struggle in the last century in four different parts. However, different kinds of

oppressions have emerged against the Kurds. “Death has always and already been a deeply political component of the Kurdish struggle, which has been marked with a cycle of rebellion and repression throughout the twentieth century,” wrote Ozsoy (2010: 45). Here, I will focus on the Turkish state’s politics over the Kurdish dead as a sovereignty struggle to control them. I will analyze the politicization of the dead as the Kurdish responses to this politics.

According to Ozsoy, “the fight for sovereignty between Kurds and the state gains its -ghostly-character as a struggle to control the corporeality, spirituality, affectivity and semantics of dead bodies between life and death” (2010: 32). In this sense, I will concentrate on the last three decades of the warfare between the PKK and the Turkish state, but the politicization of the dead goes back to the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, in particular in relation to two key figures in the Kurdish resistance; Seyh Said (1925) and Seyid Rıza (1938). Neither of these prominent leaders has a tomb. Gravelessness, “mass-graving, banning or attacking funeral ceremonies, delivering corpses to the families on the condition of secret interment or interment in places and times determined by state authorities, destroying graveyards and gravestones, legally or extra-legally punishing those who attend funerals ceremonies” (Ozsoy, 2010: 28) are Turkish state’s policies towards the Kurdish dead.

The state’s policy is to actively produce new strategies of control over the Kurdish dead by not allowing them to have a proper burial ceremony. There is a strong relation between the politicization of the death in Kurdish society and the state’s politics around the death. For instance, *serhildans* (uprisings, Kurdish intifada) has an important role in politicization of the death. The struggle to get the dead body and designing massive funeral ceremonies as forms of resistance and appropriating death into the nationalist struggle through specific rituals of martyrdom were institutionalized during the *serhildans* in the early 1990s, which first started in Kerboran (Dargeçit) and Nusaybin districts of Mardin and Cizre district of Şırnak after the funerals of the PKK guerrillas (ibid. 45; Çelik 2016). On the other hand, the Kurds counter the state policies by reclaiming their dead and ascribing them value and meaning. Most Kurds believe that the state’s policies over their dead as a crucial element of the highly institutionalized psychological warfare to destroy people’s motivation for struggle. All people who I interviewed in Diyarbakır and Dersim in 2016 told me that the most painful moment was the bombing of the martyr cemeteries during

fall of 2015. They believe that this policy aims to destroy their motivation for struggle. Similarly, it is a lesson that is given by state to show what will happen to them if their children joined the guerrilla. It is also a psychological warfare of the state to inflict pain on the families. For instance, Yıldız' brother was killed in an air attack in 1999 in Sason, after travelling to the North from the South of Kurdistan. His corpse could not be buried for a while and was left out in the open for years. His remains were buried in the Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery in 2014. However, in 2016 this cemetery was bombed. She expressed her feelings in these words:

> They intentionally attacked the Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery guerrillas had constructed. We all families were very much psychologically ruined. It was more painful than his martyrdom. They fear our dead. We went to construct the cemetery again, gathering the bones scattered all around and reburied them.

This narrative points to the centrality of the politics over the dead in the ongoing psychological warfare that is used throughout the war in Kurdistan. I argue that policies over the Kurdish dead has led to the politicization of deaths in Kurdish society as well as the widespread deaths and violence in same society. Hişyar Ozsoy's PhD thesis titled "Between Gift and Taboo: Death and the Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey" (2010) is an important source about death and politics around it in the Kurdish society. Ozsoy focuses on "politico-symbolic deployments of death in figurations of national identity and sovereignty in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey" (2010). Ozsoy analyzes the political effects of the death of the Kurds who lost their lives in the rebellion in the last hundred years on Kurdish society. Drawing attention to the link between death and politics, Ozsoy suggests that these deaths not only are conceived as biological loss in the memory of Kurds but also have severely affected the Kurdish national identity as "martyrs." Ozsoy focuses on the deaths affecting the Kurdish national identity and society in terms of symbolism, with examples of Şêx Said and Seyid Rıza whose grave sites are still unknown. These deaths prevail daily life, politics, and public space. This tells us that these deaths have a permanent place in the collective memory of the Kurdish society in symbolic terms. For this reason, the Turkish state's policies over the Kurdish dead aim to "eradicate the power of the Kurdish dead" (ibid: 29). According to Ozsoy, these policies, which are constructed in order to prevent the effects of these deaths that are "national-symbolic" for Kurds, to destroy the memory of them, and to eliminate these losses, the knowledge of their struggle, and more importantly to

prevent them from coming out again, are formed around gravelessness (ibid: 308). Ozsoy argues that "the Kurds construct a symbolic / moral economy of gift with their dead to reclaim them from the abject state of waste into the sacred and regenerative realm of martyrdom through highly masculine forms of ritualized" (2010: 32). He refers to it as the power of the Kurdish dead and this process corresponds to the politicization of death as well.

The politicization of death is not a new phenomenon; most nation states have used the power of the dead through the concept of martyrdom to construct their national identities. According to Verdery, it is precisely this uncanny power of the dead body that is processed into a site of political profit (in Ozsoy, 2010: 30). However, the politicization of death has also become a part of resistance for many communities. For instance, the dead bodies of Kurdish guerrillas, Palestinian martyrs, the disappeared in Argentina "… are repositioned in culturally specific ways as powerful affective and symbolic forces that shape power, identities and struggles" (Ozsoy, 2010: 30).

The protracted warfare between the PKK and Turkish state has resulted in about forty thousand dead bodies in the last three decades. The Turkish state's politics over the Kurdish dead after it kills them, and Kurdish responses to these has been leading to the politization of death since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. The authorities engage into refusal of delivering the dead body to the family and interring it clandestinely, theft of cenaza (corpse), as it is expressed popularly in Kurdish society. Yet, the state's policies over Kurdish dead are not coherent; they are changeable in time and space. The strategies are reproduced and used constantly as a sovereignty apparatus to control and mange human bodies and territories at the border of the death. Ozsoy remarks these politics as follows:

> The specific forms of the deployment of this politics of surveillance over the Kurdish dead depend on the place, authorities in charge, general climate of Kurdish politics at the time and the organizational strength of local Kurdish communities. That is, this is not a monolithic politics applied the same way regardless of time, space and socio-political dynamics. Despite this diversity of its forms and contingency of its applications, however, I argue that this politics constitutes a systematic technique of sovereign rule whose objective is to obstruct the politico-symbolic construction of death, to clearly dissociate the dead from the living, and to prevent the dead from being regenerated into the Kurdish national-symbolic (2010: 29).

Finally, Ozsoy tells us that similar policies against the PKK guerrillas have been regenerated in the 90's, when Kurdistan was turned into a land of the gravelessness. Ozsoy finished his dissertation in 2010 with this sentence: “I wish this text to be read as a “grave” I have tried to construct in writing, a grave particularly for those who still lie buried unmarked, for those who could not be mourned for properly” (ibid: 2010).

This research is parallel to Ozsoy's thesis in the sense that it evokes the practices in Kurdistan produced by the state within the framework of the mourning hierarchy. However, when Ozsoy focuses on the policy of the state's continued gravelessness policy as an instrument of the establishment of sovereignty in Kurdistan, the graves have not yet begun to be built in Northern Kurdistan for those fragile group of people who are not considered to be worth of being mourned and whose loss is not considered to be a loss. For the PKK guerrillas, cemeteries had begun to be built in many parts of Northern Kurdistan[40] between 2013 and 2015. It cannot be argued that these graveyards built in the territory, which is marked by the fragile line between peace and war between the state and the PKK are legitimate in the eyes of the state. Moreover, even those who work in the cemetery are considered guilty before the law. In other words, both the forms of establishment and ontological existence of these places are "illegal" according to the state. As a matter of fact, as of the autumn of 2016, by attacking and destroying these places, the state showed that these were not "legitimate" places. In this respect, although the policies of gravelesness pointed out by Ozsoy still exist, I think that these policies have been severely broken by this unique practice of cemetery-building and commemoration. This study suggests that the gravelessness as a systematized state practice is severely interrupted by this exception in Kurdistan.

4.3. The Symbolic and Political Constructions of Death in the Kurdish Movement

Social scientists have recently suggested to look at the emotions in order to reveal the semantic world of society and to understand the factors that mobilize them (Ahmed, 2014; Navaro, 2012; Das and Klein 2000). These new works in the social sciences draw attention to the role of philosophy and emotions in shaping the subjects and cultures. Ahmet and Yael Navaro respectively define energy in terms of affectivity. Yael Navaro discusses the interaction between

[40] These graveyards were built mostly in rural areas of Diyarbakır, Dersim, Şırnak, and Bitlis.

subject and object in terms of time and space, specifically to Cyprus (2012). Veena Das, in the *Social Suffering* (1997) and *Violence and Subjectivity* (2000), focuses on how the emotion generated after the experience of violence affects the subject and the collective memory. Kleinma and Das discuss how the subject transforms within these processes in the context of "imaginary experiences." They argue that "It is necessary to examine how the subjectivity-the individual's internal experience, including his own views in the relational field of power-is produced through the experience of violence (Kleinman and Das 1997 in Navaro 2014).

It is important to look at the PKK's ideology to understand how Kurdish people deal with social suffering as the consequence of war, torture, losses, and depression. These problems are dependent on the political and institutional power of the state and the PKK. Thus, it is significant to look at people's responses to these problems as they are influenced by those forms of power. Thousands of people lost their lives in the war in Kurdistan. During the 90s there were thousands of forced migrations, uncountable unsolved murders, disappearances, and torture was very common in daily life in many cities. In this sense, the symbolic and political construction of death in the PKK as a state building project has a significant role for Kurds to deal with these problems. PKK as a guerrilla movement is based on intense violence, so death is highly common in the Kurdish society. For instance, according to a recent research, 2.722 people lost their lives in the conflict only in the last two years. In the conflicts that have taken place in Turkey during this period, 771 security officers, including 447 soldiers, 251 police, 43 village guards, 1055 PKK guerrillas, and 448 civilians lost their lives, and 1699 were injured.[41] Therefore, death and the discourse around the death have an important part in the PKK's ideology. However, what is the perception of the death in the PKK? Firstly, sanctification of the death through the concept of martyrdom is the center of the PKK's ideology. It can be said that this sanctification is the basic element in the movement and a significant instrument that mobilizes its members. The discourse around sanctification of the death has been produced in the all PKK's practices such as its speeches, political and literary texts, meetings and statements. The importance and the value that the PKK attributs to martyrs has been reproduced repeatedly in everyday life. "PKK is a movement of martyrs" is the most important motto of the movement. Emphasis of devotion to martyrs is as common as the guerrillas' love for

[41] http: / / www.bbc.com / turkce / haberler-turkiye-41048668 [access date 25.08.2017]

Kurdistan in the ideological texts. The perception of martyrs in the PKK can be seen in all its statements:

> Kurdistan's brave guerrillas have turned their bodies into earthwork for their people against enemy attacks, for the freedom of Kurdistan and the future of Kurdish people.[42]

Not only PKK guerrillas but also "ordinary" Kurds, particularly those whose children joined the PKK believe that the struggle is legitimate so death is normal. For instance, almost all of my interviewees expressed this idea as follows: "guerrillas loved their welat [homeland, in Kurdish], and died for it". Perpetual and widespread presence of death consistently reinforces this belief. Ozsoy argues that "Kurds organize massive funeral ceremonies highlight something more than psychological warfare: the whole process of politicizing and appropriating death into the Kurdish national symbolic and its corresponding claims to national territory" (ibid. 35-36).

The death itself is at the center of the PKK's ideology. For instance, hundreds of people have died in more than a year. PKK is a long-term guerrilla movement, so it has witnessed tens of thousands of deaths. There is no such example in the world. How can the PKK maintain its struggle? I think that alongside the legitimacy of the struggle against the state's versatile and widespread violence, the continuity is also related to the myth of martyrdom that is constructed by the PKK. Undoubtedly, the PKK's discourse around the death is related to national identity. In this discourse, death is normal and inevitable to construct Kurdish identity and to liberate Kurdistan as a territory. For a guerrilla's movement violence is the only way to resist against the state. Therefore, guerrillas who "loved their *welat*" become martyrs in this logic. The concept of martyrdom in the PKK is something more than religious; it encompasses "the whole process of politicizing and appropriating death into the Kurdish national symbolic and its corresponding claims to national territory" (ibid. 35-36) in Ozsoy words.

On the other hand, I argue that the belief and ideas about death which has significant role in mobilization of both guerrillas and other Kurds is not only related to the national ideals; it is also personal and familial. Namely, on the one hand, many PKK guerrillas have witnessed the death of

[42] http: / / www.firatnews.com / haber-2747&baslik=gerilla-cenazesine-saldiriya-karsi-serhildan-cagrisi.anf [access date 25.08.2017]

their *hevals* [friends, in Kurdish]. Heval is key term that refers to the most valuable relationship. All guerrillas give an importance to their relations with hevals (their comrades) higher than to their relations with parents, siblings, and even commanders of the PKK. Heval is someone that you can die for. In this sense, the death of hevals, hevals' martyrdom is an important justification / reason to continue the struggle. It is a significant motivation for guerrillas, hence they fight for their hevals and their memory. This process is something more than national; it is psychological, emotional, and personal. That's why the notion of guerrillas' deaths as martyrdoms have accompanied almost all speeches. Therefore, there is not only one coherent or logical aim for guerrillas to fight; we should look at their personal, emotional, and psychological motivations as well:

> A man is never simply a figure, not even an exemplary figure in the logic of an emblem, a rhetoric of the flag or of martyrdom. A man's life, as unique as his death, will always be more than a paradigm and something other than a symbol‖ (Derrida, 1994: xiv in Ozsoy, 2010: 44).

Similarly, different generations from same families participated in the PKK as a long-termed movement. Many people have joined the PKK to get revenge for their loved ones. The state is becoming not only the enemy of Kurds as a nation, but also the enemy of certain families. Many people underlined this point during my fieldwork. For example, Amed participated in the guerrilla after his elder brother lost his life in the PKK. Same examples are highly common in Kurdish society. I meet a mother from the MEYA-DER and she told me:

> This struggle is all of us. Our children and grand-children lost their lives in this struggle. Even if the PKK gives up its struggle, we will not give up (2016).

4.4. The Perception of Martyrdom and Mourning in the Kurdish Movement

The death itself has significant role in the PKK's struggle. Death is something that is always on the agenda of both the guerrillas and the civilians in the Kurdish society. Indeed, the practice around death which mostly appears in the mourning process has a huge place in both the Kurdish movement and in the Kurdish society. The politicization of the death and the practice around death have also become a part of resistance for the PKK. The PKK organizes huge funeral ceremonies. Tens of thousands of people gather to express their respect to the dead and their families. It is very

interesting that the mothers and family members usually do not cry. Moreover, they dance folk dances and celebrate the martyrs.

A very articulate Kurdish militant since the late 1980s with who Ozsoy had an interview, interpreted the state's stakes in controlling the Kurdish dead as follows:

> Especially in the 1990s, most guerrilla funerals were like weddings. Because when a guerrilla dies, people say he / she married Kurdistan. That is why they fear our dead. The police go crazy when they see so many people gathering around the martyrs and expressing their love, their respect. I mean when people and the dead become united as one. Then they attack funeral ceremonies, kill people, destroy gravestones, and all that. So, we gather for the new dead. We reconstruct the gravestones. It goes on and on like that (Ozsoy, 2010: 34).

Kurdistan is very similar to the case of Palestinian where wedding becomes a metaphor to signify death; an affective bond with national homeland (Khalili, 2007). For instance, "love for Kurdistan" is defined with respect to self-sacrifice; physical murder is translated into a superior death, that is martyrdom, a useful gift within the Kurdish national symbolic, and the martyr becomes the affective figure that enkindles feelings of militancy and viscerally, and embeds national pedagogy (Peteet 1991: 151 in Ozsoy 2010: 36).

It is important for this study to look at the perceptions of martyrs and martyrdoms by relatives who lost their close ones and who experienced violence in this sense, and the emotions that are associated with it. The cemeteries create a new collective memory in Kurdistan through both, the objects there and the practices that take place there. However, discourses that emerge on the level of emotion and belief have a similar function. What does it mean to say for the lost ones that the PKK is a "movement of martyrs" which has become the motto of the PKK since the 90s? Zarife, who spent all of her life in the PKK struggle, says what the concept of martyrdom means in the PKK:

> This concept is a concept used by all the oppressed peoples in all the states and against those states. .... A culture of martyrdom in the PKK is developed with the revolt. This culture is met with the spirit of the living environment. The culture of martyrdom is the most valuable sense in the PKK. At the same time, it is a reason for life. (Zarife, 2016)

All of the interviewees describe their relatives who have lost their lives in conflict as "martyrs". Explanations about the concept of martyrdom are discussed in the context of state violence and the resistance against it. In this sense, because this resistance is legitimate, the struggle on this path is considered as martyrdom:

> We call it martyr, according to our heart, martyr again because they are oppressed people, if the oppressed fight against the oppression and they become martyrs then they are martyrs; for you are taking their property by force, you are plundering, you are taking away their language, you are taking away their culture, and they rebel against it causes they want their life back. If a person become martyrs, then they are martyrs. (Mehmet, 2016)

In addition, interviewees also refer to different perceptions of martyrdom. According to my interlocutors, the soldiers who are under the "command" of the state are not real martyrs; the real martyrs are the guerrillas. Zarife makes the difference between the two:

Yıldız tells about how the "martyrs sacrifice themselves for the rest of us" in the following words:

> The most blessed rank! Ya jiyaneki bi şeref ya mirinekî bi şeref (an honorable death or an honorable life). They sacrifice their bodies for a free life. Today Kendal has been martyred just so that I am comfortable. (Yıldız 2016).

A MEYA-DER worker with who we talked about the concept of martyrdom during my fieldwork expressed the PKK's perception of martyrdom as follows:

> Their friends were their witnesses witnessed them as they struggled against the oppression. They are martyred because they lost their lives while fighting in the presence of their friends. This is how the concept of martyrdom of the PKK makes sense. (2016)

As it can be seen, it cannot be argued that the perception of martyrdom in Kurdistan is related to religious belief. However, this perception and the destructive experience of war have turned out to be directing subjects into a metaphysical field from time to time. From this point of view, it can be argued that war and resistance have led some relatives of the lost to be haunted by certain feelings and beliefs. Navaro conceptually uses the word "haunting" while focusing on the ways in which the absent Greek Cypriots influence the Turkish Cypriots' perceptions, feelings, and practices. She argued that the ruins of the Greek Cypriots who no longer live there, haunt the Turkish Cypriots in different ways. Yavaro noted that "although something does not exist

physically, it can have the power to affect" and "those who are haunted by this thing must not necessarily have a metaphysical belief in ghosts" (2014: 43).

During my research in Kurdistan, both narratives about the dead / images of the dead and the experiences of destructive loss lead to certain feelings to haunt the relatives of the missing people. They manifest themselves in the form of dreams, feelings, and rituals. Some interviewees talked about their dreams and the voices they hear while expressing their feelings about their missing relatives. Haydar told me about how he found his brother's grave:

> Well I had that feeling that when I went to that area all the time there was something so supernatural that somebody was calling me as if somebody was calling me 'my brother'. And after I got him out of there, the voices stopped. (2016)

Deniz, who hasn't seen her husband for years, says that the light has risen from the grave of her husband, and that the villagers have seen it. According to her, after her husband was moved to the guerrilla cemetery, nobody this this light again:

> Someone helped me and told that I passed by there after Shakesmus was buried at night. There was a light above his grave. He watched the lighting. He said I had watched that light and he had thought "this friend had been martyred and the light appeared above his grave. (2016)

Rihan said that before she heard the news of her son's death, she had a dream about him where he was a baby in her lap, and that an eagle came and took him from her.

The legends about the guerrillas fighting in Kurdistan are not new. These myths are usually about the extraordinary power and immortality of the guerrillas. Again, in a geographical area where thousands of people died, the fact that the environment is haunted by the dead is a situation that has been widespread in Kurdistan for many years. However, these new narratives around the dead guerrillas give the legends a different dimension. The people who worked here during this period say that they witnessed the events:

> I said that I would never forget the three female friends, it was like the corpses remained new from 98 to 2013. 15 years past, water still flowed from their bodies. We, 5-6 people, could barely carry them. (Mehmet, 2016)

This event is told by a number of interviewees.

4.5. Cemeteries

As I mentioned before, due to the intense fighting between the PKK and the Turkish army during the 1990's, guerrillas were buried where they fell. A year later, all of these graves were lost. During the state of exception (OHAL) in 1990s, the PKK guerrillas were buried by the state in mass graves, common graves, and even in dumps. Funeral ceremonies were forbidden, so people conducted services in secret and buried their children at night. Such practices became routine during the 1990s; many people could not bury and construct a tomb for the guerrillas, as in the case of the disappeared people in Turkey.

PKK guerrillas started to construct cemeteries in South Kurdistan, mostly in Qandil where the PKK headquarters are located, in the beginning of 2000s. They buried guerrillas who lost their lives in the same areas. Guerrillas who mostly died in airstrikes and conflict with Turkish state, and the KDP peshmerge were buried in these cemeteries. Similarly, some cemeteries were constructed in other locations such as in Zap, Xinere, Zagros, etc. where the PKK guerrillas have been active. They also searched for the graves of those who lost their lives at different times during the 1990s. These searches were conducted through various mapping methods, information given by surviving guerrillas, notes taken by guerrillas, and noting marks on the land to return to, as well as information given by the villagers. They traced dead bodies, dug the soil with their hands in order not to damage the remaining bones, collected the objects belonging to the dead, and carried these bodies to the cemeteries they established.

Guerrillas bought the remains and collected them in the central cemeteries where they conducted funeral services and reburied them. *Bêrîtan* as a documentary film which was directed by Halil Uysal (2006) focus on the transporting of these bodies to the guerrilla cemeteries through the example of PKK's guerrilla, Bêrîtan who lost her life in 1992 in Qandil. Her grave had been lost for 14 years, untill the villagers from South Kurdistan gave information to the PKK and the PKK took her body to a guerrilla cemetery. The PKK guerrillas who were able to find a few hundred corpses of those who lost their lives in the war that has been going on for over 40 years moved

those bodies to these cemeteries one by one. Since it is very difficult to find bodies buried in the ground after long years, the guerrillas who were previously buried in mass graves, “dumped” in waste yards, and who collectively died in the airstrikes. Therefore, most of those graves are anonymous, whose owners have not been identified. Either dates of birth and death or place of death is missing on almost all of the gravestones at these cemeteries. Apart from the PKK guerrillas, the YPG / YPJ guerrillas were also buried in the “martyr cemeteries” that were built in Rojava. There are many guerrilla cemeteries in different cantons of Rojava such as Kobanê, Efrîn and Cezîre. Because of the presence of the YPG / YPJ guerrillas who have died in Rojava in the last three years, these spaces began to be sacred places that Kurds visited almost every day. The construction of guerrilla cemeteries as a state building project aims to create a communal memory of the PKK. The guerrilla cemeteries built outside of Turkey are not a part of this research, so I will not go into details regarding these cemeteries.

CHAPTER 5

LOSSES AND RESİSTANCE

5.1. Losses in Kurdish Society

The widespread, systematic and unlikely policies that the state has developed in Kurdistan have caused great losses in the late 90's. These losses are concentrated in the period of 1993-1996 when the concept of low-intensity war was rigorously applied. These losses in the 90s have occurred in different forms such as detention, forced loss-disappearances, and unsolved murders. According to the records of the Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi[43], which traces the memory of violence that the state imposes on Kurdistan by means of its research and archiving studies, 35,536 people lost their lives in the battle that took place in Kurdistan from the nineties to the present day. These are civilian deaths, forced disappearances, the state's law enforcement officers and PKK militants who lost their lives in the conflict. According to the same report, the number of people lost by force is 1352.[44] The same report points to the actors of these losses that have been described as unsolved murders for years:

> Losses have often been lost in their homes, workplaces or public places, in the presence of witnesses, by public officials, being clearly taken into custody and being detained.[45]

In the interviews that I conducted in Diyarbakır, I listened to the arguments supported the assertions that the actors of the unsolved murders were indeed known. Sarya who lost her husband in an unsolved murder says the following:

> He left the house to go to the hospital. He had short breath and went to get his pump. He went to get medicine. In Koşuyulu[46], they are holding it somewhere far away and throwing it in the car. They take a taxi and take him away. A young

[43] Truth Justice Memory Center
[44] The Memory Center prepared these figures based on the 2013 report of the The Grand National Assembly of Turkey Human Rights Investigation Commission http://hakikatadalethafiza.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/rapor-22-01.png [access date 15.06.2017]
[45]http://hakikatadalethafiza.org/turkiyede-zorla-kaybetmeler-ve-cezasizliga-dair-temel-bilgiler/turkiyede-zorla-kaybetmeler/ [access date 15.06.2017]
[46] It is a district located in the center of Diyarbakir.

> man saw him at the exact moment, and came and said to me, " xalê Fikrî birin" (They took uncle Fikri). The car is Toros model, with ash color glass, and you can see the outside from inside the car but can't see inside the car from outside. This is how the car looks, Toros model. My daughter's house is also there. … I saw him crying, he said they took my father away. I went to the DGM and hither and thither .... Since then, we neither have heard of him. (Sarya)

Çelik tells about white Renault Toros that Sarya's husband getting lost with in an unsolved case, and its relation as an image to the collective memory in Kurdistan, as "an image of dirty war[47]" during 90s (Celik, 2014: 1).

In this section, firstly, I will discuss practices of state, which caused great number of death during 90s. Then, I will focus on the practices that the state indirectly implements through paramilitary structures such as village guards, JITEM and Hizbullah, established under the "private security strategy" (Göral 2016 and Çelik, 2016), together with the practices the state directly implements, such as death, detention, torture, arrest, burning villages and forced migration.

5.2. State Violence in Kurdish Society

90s were the years of state violence, great numbers of death, forced migration, unsolved murders, blindness and torture in the North Kurdistan. The huge numbers of killings were the first practices that the state had put into effect. The unsolved murders that began in Kurdistan in the early nineties spread to all cities in a short time. Çelik reports that the loss cases reached its peak between the years 1993 and 1997, and that the number increased to 100 and more people each year (Çelik, 2015).

The forced migration was another practice that the state had imposed. The state planned to burn down the villages and to break the PKK's sphere of sociality while also breaking its influence on the Kurds. The villagers were evacuated and burned with the logic of "dry the marsh to destroy the mosquitoes." It can be uttered that burning the villagers on the grounds that the village guards were not accepted was the basic policy that the state implement in the 90s in Kurdistan. The state's law

[47] "Dirty war" refers to the regime's use of kidnapping, torture, and murder, with huge members of the civilian population. Therefore, I prefer to use "dirty war" in this text to refer war that was conducted in Kurdistan during 90s.

enforcement authorities put pressure on the people to bring the villagers together and make them village guards. In 1989, at the beginning of the meeting, Brigadier General Recail Ugurluoglu, who had one of these meetings in Van, said, "yes, or no. Choose up sides; you are either on our side or on PKK's side" and clearly threatened the villagers.[48] Thus, the forced migration policy was introduced in Kurdistan. Arslan points out to this policy of the state saying that "the main reason for the forced migration is the fact that the Turkish state has turned and/or emptied the villages as a "war strategy" (Arslan, 2015).

The interviews I conducted in Diyarbakir supported this argument. Sarya, whose husband is disappeared and son is a victim of unsolved murder in İstanbul, whose other son was killed in guerilla fighting, told about her reason of migration from Kulp to Diyarbakir as follows:

> In Pasur (Kulp), 25 years ago, my house has been bombed and burnt, I have come to Amed. .... There was so much pressure and operations were conducted. They were bombing my house, my home. My home, they burned three houses of mine and bombed the last remaining barracks. While we were inside with the stuff. 25 years ago. ... Then there were embargoes on the villagers, the they were burning the villages, both they and the village guards were beating the people (Sarya).

5.2.1. Paramilitary Forces in Kurdish Society, Village Guard System, JITEM and Hizbullah

As I mentioned before, the same violence has been introduced in different forms by paramilitary forces besides violence by the state. It is precisely these illegal, dangerous structures with vague borders that made the war in Kurdistan in the 90s "dirty". It is worth noting here that paramilitary systems such as village guards, JITEM and Hizbullah are not just a system put into force in Turkey. I will focus on them in terms of apparatus that caused death in Kurdistan during 90s.

Village guard as a paramilitary system can be seen in different formats in many countries. In countries such as Peru, Colombia and Chechnya, where similar "dirty" battles took place, similar paramilitary units were created by the state to suppress resistance. These are examples of "rondas campesinas" (peasant patrols) in Peru, "united self-defense forces" in Colombia, and "Kadyrov's

[48] Osman Aytar, Hamidiye Alaylarından Köy Koruculuğuna, (İstanbul: Medya Güneşi Yayınları, 1992), 183.

followers" in Chechnya (Kadyrovtsy).[49] The Village Guard System was established as a new "defend" mechanism against the PKK in 1985[50].

Although the Village Guard System was actualized by a legal regulation, the job descriptions and legal statutes of the village guards are ambiguous. This ambiguity was the basis of the guards' committing crime. There was no obstacle against the village guards' seizure of the Êzîdi, Assyrian and Alevi villages (McDowall, 2004: 560). Although the most severe consequence of the village system is the evacuation / burning / migration of villages,[51] as the researches made in recent years have revealed, the village guard has also led to the formation of losses. In his 2013 report on the Village Guard System of Migrants' Social Solidarity and Culture Association (GÖÇ-DER) it is stated that "in many cases the guards are carrying out acts of violence leading to murder in order not to leave the villages they occupy".[52] Although, whether the state had achieved its aims with the Village Guard System is a controversial issue, it is clear that many guerrillas and civilians lost their lives because of coloration of state and village guards.

Another state's apparatus that cause great number of losses in Kurdistan is JITEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Fights Against Terrorism). Çelik argues that the state put JITEM into action in the mid-nineties as a special way of fighting (2014: 43). Similarly, according to Jongerden, the state's founding of JITEM meant a war strategy based on "low-intensity" field domination, giving up on the "total war" strategy (Jongerden 2008). As a result, JITEM, whose members are mostly consisting of confessor PKK militants, quickly created a great wave of fear and it has committed thousands of unsolved murders in Kurdistan.[53] In the nineties' "dirty war" memory of Kurdistan, JITEM is involved in unsolved deaths. It is possible to see this fear in many interviews that I had

[49] Nur Tüysüz (2011). "Yerel Güvenlik ve Etnik Kimlik: Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Bir Köy Üzerinden Köy Koruculuğu Sistemi" (unpublished master's thes

[50] It can be siad that the Hamidiye Regiments that established by ı. Abdülhamit as a paramilitary structure in 1890 have a same structure with village guard system.

[51] See: (1) Hakikat ve Adaletin İzinde Doksanları Hatırlamak. 2014. Toplum ve Kuram Dergisi 9 ve 10. Sayı. (2) Akın ve Danışman. 2012. Bildiğin Gibi Değil. Metis Yayınları: İstanbul. (3) http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/images/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Goc-Der_Koruculuk-Raporu_2013.pdf [access date 17.06.2017]

[52]http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/images/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Goc-Der_Koruculuk-Raporu_2013.pdf [acces date 17.06.2017]

[53] http://hakikatadalethafiza.org/tag/faili-mechul/ also see: http://www.ihd.org.tr/faili-mel-siyasal-cinayetler/ [acces date 17.06.2017]

in Diyarbakir. When I interviewed Sarya, she told that her husband was kidnapped by JITEM, which communicated with her son in the following words:

> They take him into JITEM. The colonel at the head of JITEM in Hz. Suleyman[54], the colonel at the head of my JITEM let Amed and [his father] talk over phone (Sarya).

Sarya receives no information about how they took her husband, or where they got him, even though she knows that her son talked to her husband, she receives no concrete information whatsoever. She told me that she only hopes to get her husband's bones and build a grave for him. Tahincioğlu states that these years are "the climate in which the lightest punishment for the targets is death", and the greatest reward of the families is "to receive the death of their children" (2013: 24). During nineties, in the urban centers such as Diyarbakır, Şırnak and Batman, and in the districts, such as Lice, Kulp, Cizre and Nusaybin, where there was mass support for the PKK, JITEM tried to establish an "absolute" power area, which led to the killing and/or loss of thousands of people. Göral describes the forced disappearances of the nineties as a "strategy of sovereignty" (2016: 138).

In this period, JITEM was not only targeting families of guerrillas, but also NGO representatives, Kurdish business people, politicians, journalists, people from almost every segment of the society. Özgür Gündem newspaper, which reported on the activities of JITEM and Hizbullah, was one of the most important institutions targeted by JITEM.[55] In 1993, dozens of journalists were killed in this way. As a matter of fact, a total of 76 employees of the newspaper, including 30 reporters, were killed within two years (Çelik, 2011). Similarly, in 1991, HEP Diyarbakır Province President Vedat Aydın was killed in the same way. On the other hand, a list of "the Kurdish businessmen who helped the PKK" and "nine hundred forty-four civil servants and sixty-seven businessmen" consisting of "PKK officers employed within the state" was made and hundreds of them were killed (Çelik, 2015). It can be said that these losses were conducted as state's war strategy. For instance, Prime Minister Tansu Çiller on November 4, 1993 made a statement as follows: "Turkey is facing a movement of terror that has become a movement of militia and widespread. We know the names of the businessmen and artists paying for PKK" (Tahincioğlu, 2013: 94-95). After this

[54] It is a district located in Sur province of Diyarbakır which is the center of JITEM in 1990's.
[55] Press is a movie that focuses on the state oppression on Özgür Gündem. *Press*. 2010. Directed by Sedat Yılmaz

statement, a businessman from Lice, Behçet Cantürk was abducted on January 14, 1994, and the next day his body was found in Sapanca, Sakarya with his driver Recep Kuzucu. The work compiled from reports prepared by different institutions on the violations of rights, made it clear that there were 1353 lost people in total, almost all of whom lost in Kurdistan (Göral, Kaya ve Işık, 2013: 22). When we look at the distribution of losses by years,[56] it is seen that the majority of these disappearances took place between 1993 and 1999. Göral asserts "the practice(s) of widespread, systematic and multifaceted state violence in Kurdistan was put into effect in the nineties" (2016: 115).

Another structure that contributed to the losses in Kurdistan in the nineties is Hizbullah. Although Hizbullah is a different structure than the village guards and JITEM was directly under the state control, it has an important role in the execution and/or disappearance of many people. Although Hizbullah is not directly under state control, the state cooperated with Hizbullah. It is hostile to the PKK ideology, on the basis of a local conflict between the Kurds in order to break the city serhildan[57] power, which had risen at the same time as the PKK's armed force on the mountain in the nineties (Çelik 2015). As a result, during the nineties, "almost one hundred percent civilian" were executed in city centers (Çelik 2015) and many of them were executed by Hizbullah.

In conclusion, it is clear that the state, in the notorious nineties, killed thousands of people and/or got them killed as a strategy of sovereignty because of the paramilitary forces that directly activated by the state and/or indirectly cooperated with it. These people are both PKK's guerrillas and civilians. Also, it cannot be argued that these practices of the state over the nineties, which are expressed through different dynamics in Kurdistan, are regular and consistent. Das and Poole state that "state violence practices [are] not absolutely unified, whose motives and purposes are not coherent practices, they also contain central and local elements within themselves" (2004: 21-22 in Göral 2016: 124). Therefore, it can be said that losses caused by village guards, JITEM and Hizbullah are realized within the framework of a certain concept that are not "absolutely unified" but created by the state in the direction of the movement of local units.

[56]http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/images/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Yay%C3%A7nlar/HAH_Konusulmayan-Gercek_2013.pdf [access date 17.06.2017]
[57] Serhildan refers to resistance in Kurdish.

5.3. Losses

As mentioned before, thousands of guerrillas lost their lives during the war that took place in Kurdistan during the 90s. A great majority of these guerrillas died soon after joining the PKK. Some of them were massacred. As a result, it was not possible to record who died where and when. Yet the issue of lost guerrillas, which has been completely ignored in the public sphere and still constitutes a taboo for the academia, remains as the main agenda of thousands of Kurdish families. The whereabouts of thousands of people who have joined the PKK resistance that has been going on for more than forty years is unknown. Most of the disappearances occurred during the mid-90s, a period of severe violence. Although many are assumed to be dead, we still do not have accurate information about what happened to whom. Not only the families, but even the PKK itself is in the dark regarding the whereabouts of these guerrillas to a large extent.

Several committees such as "The Committee for PKK Martyrs," and "The Committee for Solidarity with the Families of PKK Martyrs" were formed in the 2000s by the PKK to determine the identities of the guerrillas who died during combats, as well as to gather and archive relevant data. Yet considering the sheer number of lives lost, the result of these efforts unfortunately remains marginal. The information on those who have been identified is shared with the public in different way. PKK periodically shared that information through media, websites, television and newspapers. Sometimes, PKK send information/letter directly to the families to inform about the lost. Although it is not very common, I witnessed that PKK sent a letter to my friend's family about her death. She joined the PKK in 2008 and lost her life in 2010. They sent condolence messages 3 years later informing the family members about her death. At the same time, they shared the information through media, websites, television and newspapers. However, even if some families are informed in this way, many of these families could not take bodies of their relatives. My friend's family still could not take her dead body. Therefore, it can be said that these families could not mourn for many years.

A similar investigation was also carried out by the guerrillas in Northern Kurdistan between the years of 2013 and 2015, when the armed conflict between the state and the PKK was suspended. The multi-faceted investigation efforts became the primary concern for the guerrillas. Due to

intense fighting between the PKK and the Turkish army during the 1990's, guerrillas were buried where they fell. A year later, almost all of these tombs were lost. During the state of emergency (OHAL) in the 1990s, the PKK guerrillas were buried by the state in mass graves, common graves and even in dumping grounds[58]. Funerals were forbidden and people conducted services in secret and buried their children at night. Such practices became routine during the 1990s; many people could not bury and construct a tomb for the guerrillas as well as disappeared people in Turkey. Therefore, the search was conducted through various mapping methods, information given by surviving guerrillas, notes taken by guerrillas, and noting marks on the land to return as well as information given by the villagers. They traced dead bodies for two years; digging the soil with their hands in order not to damage the remaining bones, collecting the objects belonging to the dead and carrying these bodies to the cemeteries they established during the negotiation process. They bought the dead and collected them in the central cemeteries where they conducted funeral services.

A guerilla from Dersim explains this process in the documentary "Bakur" (North) which focuses on the processes of guerrillas' withdrawal from Turkey, on the grounds of the "peace process," to Southern Kurdistan:

> We collected all the friends we know to the central areas and buried them again. We wrote their names on the commemorative jar and put information about them in the jars in order for them be found by their family in case we were not here. However it is minute member; mainly we were able to find only a few friends from hundreds of martyrs. No-one knows now where these bodies are because of the war. Those who know the locations of the fallen ….. have now also died…

The bones and bodies recovered through the challenging investigations were duly buried at the guerilla cemeteries, which were built around several cities in Kurdistan such as Diyarbakır, Lice, Kulp, Şırnak, Mardin, Bitlis and Siirt. But as I am going to explain below, these cemeteries were

[58] Same practices is still ongoing in different way. A dead body belonging to a person who lost his/her life in conflict in Şırnak has been kept on the roadside for 5 days and it is banned to be taken and buied by soldiers. Peoples' Demokratic Party (HDP) Şırnak deputy Leyla Birlik submıts parlıamentary questıon to receive an answer about that practice. http://www.demokrathaber.org/guncel/leyla-birlik-sirnak-ta-5-gundur-yol-kenarinda-bekletilen-cenazeyi-h88511.html [access date 22. 08. 2017] Another example, Taybet İnan, a 55-years-old woman was killed by the police in the middle of the street in Silopi and her body remained right in the middle of the street for days before it could be taken to the hospital morgue on the 7th day. https://www.hdp.org.tr/en/en/news/from-hdp/urgent-appeal-of-faysal-sariyildiz-on-the-curfews-implemented-by-the-turkish-government/8904 [access date 22. 08. 2017]

demolished to a large extent by the state following the fall of 2015, when the armed conflict started again.

5.3.1. Death Without Grave

The phenomenon of loss that emerged in Kurdistan as a result of the conflict, torture, execution do not appear as a moment but rather a manifestation of a broad state violence both before and after. It is not known what happened to the thousands lost in the 90s. However, the studies have shown that the dead bodies of forced losses were mostly uncovered in roadsides, cesspools, empty spaces without being buried. These unburied bodies did not only belong to disappeared person, many of them belonged to guerrillas. According to the data obtained from the Truth Justice Memory Center, 22,101[59] guerrillas lost their lives in the war in Kurdistan as of 2013. While some of them were buried by guerrillas or by villagers during conflicts, many of them left graveless. Guerrillas who could be easily destroyed biologically were often left graveless. Gravelessness should not be perceived as just the deceased as not being buried. In any case, almost all of them were not taken by their families. Therefore, it can be said that during nineties Kurdistan has become a huge area where many deaths were left unburied. The absence of the grave of the deceased is also related to the removal of the right to mourning of those who left behind. As Butler refers to "the discriminatory distribution of public mourning" (Butler 2015: 34-6) gravelessness is a practice that emerges as a result of the hierarchy of mourning. In this hierarchy, mourning to guerrillas is not regarded as mourning, as their lives are not considered as real lives. Moreover, the guerrillas left graveless by this hierarchy of grief are not only removed biologically, it is desired to prevent to form a memory of them, and therefore they are also wiped out completely from the memory of the society.

Although, major losses experienced during the nineties, put side by side with the figures, were not addressed either in the public domain nor in the academic literature. Some of these losses were never mentioned because they were subject to the different type of value hierarchies. For instance, while the losses of the state's law enforcement officers during the 90s were largely spoken around

[59] http://hakikatadalethafiza.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/rapor-22-01.png [access date 17.06.2017]

martyrdoms (Değirmencioğlu, 2014) the forced disappearances of civilian and PKK guerrillas were completely ignored. As I will specify in more detail in the next part, civilian casualties and forced disappearances were spoken in limited public realm by dissidents in the Turkish public in time. It can be said that the transfer of these losses to the public realm was possible largely through the continuing periodic protests of the Saturday Mothers. Thus, some scholarly work has emerged, though in limited numbers, about the forced disappearances.[60] These studies reveal how widespread violence is from detention to losses witnessing that violence is systematic rather than coincidental. However, although the guerrilla losses make up the largest part of the losses[61], these losses were discussed neither during the 90s nor at present. It is not surprising that these losses, which are not spoken in the public sphere, have not been studied at the academy.

The ones that eventually lost because of the different manifestations of state violence, and the practices that are conducted to remove/destroy/delete this loss altogether, have led, on the contrary, a strong memory in the Kurdish society. The greatest example of this is the massive embracing of guerrilla funerals from the beginning of the 1990s, and the transformation of these embracing into serhildans. It is possible to see examples of this in many Kurdish cities, especially in places like Cizre, Nusaybin and Şırnak. As a matter of fact, this mass, which came together for the funeral ceremonies, did not only cause the formation of a social memory, but also led to the period of serhildans, in which the masses, which had seriously a compelling effect on the state during the nineties, were mobilized.

Similarly, the activism of Saturday Mothers, Peace Mothers and MEYA-DER can be defined as a different way of struggle that created a strong memory of losses in North Kurdistan. As will be seen later, although, these struggles were carried out in different ways, they emerged against hierarchy of mourning.

[60] Ahıska (2014) and Göral (2016) can be exemplified as two important references about the forced disappearances.
[61] According to state report (2013), 22 thousand 101 guerrillas lost their life in war. http://hakikatadalethafiza.org/turkiyede-zorla-kaybetmeler-ve-cezasizliga-dair-temel-bilgiler/turkiyede-zorla-kaybetmeler/ [access date 21.06.2017]

5.4. Passive Resistance

5.4.1. The Saturday Mothers

The war in Kurdistan in terms of living state violence and forced losses resembles the dirty war in Argentina. Between 1976 and 1982, thousands of people were lost in a dirty war in Argentina led by the coup-generals. Mothers of the lost gathered at Plaza de Mayo voiced their desire to learn the fate of their missing relatives and their desire for the right and justice around the slogan "never again." These actions caused those involved in the dirty war in Argentina to be brought to the courts (Robben, 2005, Sosa, 2009, Gandsman 2013). Just like the mothers/relatives of those who were forcibly lost in Argentina, the mothers of those who were forced to die in Kurdistan came together in front of Galatasaray High School in Istanbul and expressed similar desire to learn the fate of their relatives. The continuous periodic protest of the Saturday Mothers caused a recognition of those who forcibly lost among the public in Turkey. In the Saturday protest—first one of which was performed on Saturday May 17, 1995—the relatives of the missing persons sat quietly telling the story of their close relatives. They have been silently demonstrating by holding aloft the photographs of their disappeared kin every Saturday in Galatasaray, Istanbul since 1995. The struggle of Saturday Mothers has a significant role in different aspects. Firstly, the Saturday Mothers movement is important in terms of gender and space in Turkey where women dominate the domestic and men dominate the urban realm. This protest that conducted by mothers can be defined as a major objection to this separation. For instance, it can be said that the Saturday Mothers broke the boundaries between the public and private sphere. The use of Istiklal Street as a public space by the mothers is very important in terms of "how urban space affected the mother's subjectivity and how the mothers effected urban space" (İvegen, 2004). Secondly, the Saturday Mothers carried the enforced disappearances to the public space. As I mentioned before, although the number of the enforced disappearances is expressed by thousands, this subject has never been spoken about in the public space until 2000s. In the middle of the 1990s the Human Rights Association (IHD) prepared some reports about disappearances, but the subject was totally ignored by public include the media, nongovernmental organizations and academy. However, hundreds of families suffered from the enforced disappearances in 1990s. I met a mother from the Peace Mothers in Diyarbakır and she told me:

> What I was most afraid of at that time was abduction of my children, because I knew that I will never see them. It was very common in 1990s. Many people, they were mostly young, were being disappeared was not reaching the public any more. They are many the disappeared people and the pain will never go away.

Rihan whom I interviewed expressed her feeling about disappearances as follows: “I was very relieved when I clarified that he joined to PKK because I was afraid that he would be kidnapped and killed”. In this sense, the visibility of the enforced disappearances is most important aspect in Saturday Mothers. Ahıska defines the politics of the Saturday Mothers as a counter-movement that "made the visibility of the enforced disappearances possible”a movement that re-casts time and creates a new space, and re-moves the subject from the space of violence ‘naturalized’ within the national temporality” (2014: 162). Also, this action has become a practice that regulates the daily life of the participants and has caused the loss to be embodied in social memory. Thus, the phenomenon of losing/loss is being announced to the broader social segments while a collective memory is being created. Ahıska argues that Saturdays Protests “plays a vital role not only in producing a new space for politics, but also in enacting political memory” (2014: 162). These actions have thus become an important part of the fight against losing.

Accordingly, Saturday Mothers themselves, like their forcibly lost children/relatives, are also excluded, alienated and at the target of state violence. For this reason, their protests were suspended on January 31, 2009. However, these periodic protests were then carried out of Istanbul and continued in Diyarbakır, Cizre, Batman and Yüksekova. These protests are still ongoing in different cities.

It is very interesting that even though, a significant number of those who participated in the Saturday protests were relatives of guerrillas at the same time, no guerrilla losses were mentioned in these protests. These losses are totally invisible and their families are completely silenced in the public realm. Ones who were the enforced disappearances during the war in Kurdistan after the mid of 1990s, to some extend extent became visible in the public space as the periodic protests of Saturday Mothers. Though it was limited, these lost people became a subject in public spaces. The academy as well has shown a limited attention to this field. However, the loss of guerrillas which might be accepted as the peak point of the “hierarchy of grief” was utterly pushed out of the public

space. Although some women who attended to the protests on Saturdays were also mothers of guerrillas, no discourse related with guerilla loss found a place for itself in these meetings. Gandsman (2013) problematize "the prevalent normative assumptions about narrative" in case of the Grand-mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. He emphasizes dominant assumptions in conceptualizations of narratives and points out and he believes that some mothers were excluded from the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. For instance, he argues that there are some people who non-narrative who are unwilling to or not capable of narrativizing their own lives. Also, some peoples' inability to produce a narrative was tied to their inability to become a human rights activist and take a political action in the name of their disappeared children (2013: 9). Gandsman focuses on some cases that they willingly reject to speak or create a narrative about their disappeared. According to Gandsman, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and human rights always emphasize voice, but this voice "one cannot be silence or deny, should one do so a disaster is certain to follow" (2013: 10).

Despite the similarities to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, there is a different process in the case of the Saturday Mothers. They construct a narrative, but in whose narrative voice? In this case, the dominant discourse about the enforced disappeared is based on the conceptualization of "innocent civilians" as a coherent narrative. Also, in the literature of the Saturday Mothers whether academic or journalistic, the notion of "innocent civilians" features prominently. This **is** a language that could be accepted by public when they are speaking about the disappeared. Furthermore, the Saturday Mothers are also silent about the personal agency of the enforced disappeared. Enforcedly, their subjectivity is invisible in this discourse and disappeared are portrayed as passive subjects. Focusing on narrative coherence as a means of making experience coherent, we should look for fragmentation and the unstructured in how people speak about their lives and individual identity. However, in the case of the Saturday Mothers, their voice is not only dominated by hegemonic discourse, it is also repressed by the state. Therefore, they are forced to create narratives in a certain way. In this sense, guerrilla's losses were "naturally" excluded from these protests. It can be said that this exclusion was guarantee for sustainability of these protests.

Relatives of the guerrilla, who lost their lives, would also come together under the roof of the Association for Peace Mothers in 2007, both drawing attention to guerrilla losses and fighting for

the establishment of peace in Kurdistan. Despite their struggle has been largely ignored, it is important to focus on the resistance practices of the Peace Mothers and the Mesopotamia Association of Assistance and Solidarity for Families with Lost Relatives (MEYA-DER) as two important examples that are drawing attention to guerrilla losses.

5.4.2. The Peace Mothers

In 1996, the relatives of the guerrillas who lost their lives during 1990s came together under the roof of the Peace Mothers initiative (İnîsiyatifa Dayike Aşiti). Women from different cities would later join the initiative. Then the Peace Mothers Association was founded in Diyarbakır in 1999, opening a branch in Istanbul as well. The members of the association were mothers whose children died during conflict. They defined their mission as "ending the war" and they carried out their first demonstration shouting "for the love of those left behind," and "mothers for peace" (Can, 2014, 35-43). The Peace Mothers' resistance had arguably two objectives. The first, although not immediately visible, objective was to public the lost guerrillas and undo the "hierarchy of mourning" built by the state. And the second objective was to fight to restore peace in Turkey.[62] For this reason the Peace Mothers made efforts to get in contact with statesmen and the mothers of soldiers who lost their lives in eastern Turkey during the conflict. They organized some meetings and came together with some groups of politicians and mothers of soldiers. Also in lines with their objectives, the Peace Mothers visited the war zone several times to stand as "human shields,"[63] demanding the restoration of peace.

The Peace Mothers Initiative's first attempt was to visit Ankara to communicate their demand for the restoration of peace to the President, Prime Minister and the Members of the Parliament. Unfortunately, they were turned down at the border of the city for reasons of "security." Yet, they persisted. In 2000, the members of the initiative were turned down once again when they attempted to meet the President of the time, Ahmet Necdet Sezer. In 2005, a group of 120 members performed a sit-in at the Parliament for being denied appointments with both Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Chief of Staff. Similarly, they were denied a meeting with Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2012, when the conflict had intensified. Furthermore, the members of the Peace

[62] https://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/160754-90-lardan-bugune-barisa-yuruyen-anneler [access date 02.06.2017]
[63] A form of protest where one performs a sit-in at the conflict zone to stop the fight.

Mothers Association were banned from entering the Parliament building following this final attempt (Can, 2014).

The Peace Mothers continued their protests in the following years. When the war started again in 2015, they gathered at Dolmabahçe Palace where the peace agreement between the state and the Kurdish movement had been declared, several times and kept a "peace watch." Their only demand was for the parties to return to the negotiation table. They voiced their insistence on peace with banners saying "Mothers won't allow war," and "We want the negotiation table restored at Dolmabahçe; we are mothers, whether Kurdish, Turkish, Laz, Circassian or Arabic, we are mothers."

In 2009, the Peace Mothers got in contact with the mothers of soldiers who lost their lives during the conflict in 1990s. Firstly, these two groups organized a meeting in Ankara. Some statesmen also joined the meeting and they organized a statement to declare in Diyarbakır. Then a group of mothers of soldiers who were member of Martyrs' Families Aid and Solidarity Association (Şehit Aileleri Dayanışma Derneği) visited Diyarbakir and meet with mothers of guerrillas. They declared a statement to give to a peace message to Turkish public. The main argument of the statement was "no more death". The Peace Mothers came together with the mothers of soldiers, who lost their lives during the fight, the year when the conflicts stopped. The Peace Mothers organized this meeting in cooperation with MEYA-DER (Mesopotamia Association of Solidarity with Families). Yılmaz, staff member of MEYA-DER and was an organizer of the meeting, talks about the meeting as follows:

> The conflicts stopped at that time. We got in contact with the ministries in Ankara and had a meeting in the presence of the mothers of soldiers having lost their lives. Government officials were also at the meeting. We invited them to Diyarbakır. Our purpose was to fight together for peace. They came to Diyarbakır in March. They were so nervous because they were afraid of other associations of martyr families as they had a meeting with us. We picked them up from the airport. We made a joint press statement but they went back hastily. We stayed with them at the hotel late at night anyway. We, too, were afraid that there would be provocation. We had planned to go to Ankara but then they stopped contacting with us. (2017)

Fatma, who is also a member of MEYA-DER, mentions the process as follows:

> It was very delicate process. They [mothers of soldiers] were so afraid because there were different Martyr families' associations and many of them were against that organizations. These families received serious threats because these groups defined us as terrorist. According to them, these families have betrayed martyrs. They spent only a night in Diyarbakır. Besides, they left immediately after the press statement and they left immediately never communicated with us and never visit the city anymore.

This meeting is very important in terms of redetermination of the public personalities of the lost guerrillas that are completely excluded from the public sphere and of appreciation of their grief. As a matter of fact, the meeting had a broad repercussion in Turkish press, as well. However, instead of creating a common ground to construct the peace in Turkey, the contact ended in the beginning.

On the other hand, between 2011 and 2012, when the armed conflict had flared up, the Peace Mothers visited conflict zones such as Lice and Şırnak several times and kept watch to demand the suspension of operations, camping out in the mountains. Hundreds of women once again served as human shields, waiting at the border for days. They listed their demands as "Let our children not die, lay the arms down, let the parties speak." When they attempted to cross the border to go to Kandil, they were stopped at the border and barred from entering Kandil by the soldiers. A woman who kept watching at the border where she was interrupted by tanks and soldiers expressed her demands as follows:

> We came here to eliminate the persecution of the guerrilla. We are not friends of death; we want neither the Turks nor the Kurds to be killed, we want neither the soldiers nor the guerrillas to be killed. I do not approve of this unscrupulousness. I do not approve of this remorselessness. I am a woman and I am going to stay here in the middle of these scorpions, these snakes and these thorns until the soldiers abort the operation.[64]

Another woman speaks as follows:

> Even relatives make it up 30 years later when they have an argument. We also should make peace now. Unless Erdoğan sits and talks to Kurds, we will not feel comfortable. Erdoğan should speak with us; he should ask us what we want from him as mothers.

[64]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNbTDkPymck [access date 02.06.2017]

The Peace Mothers also entered conflict areas during the period of conflict in the Kurdish cities and staged a sit in. For this purpose, the activists of the Peace Mothers had stayed for 10 days in the conflict area in Sur, where the first curfew was declared on December 2, 2015.

However, as also Özlem Aslan said, because of the hierarchy between the two mothers, mothers of guerrillas and mothers of soldiers, the contact between the two groups started and ended simultaneously. Özlem Aslan argues in her study Politics of Motherhood and the Experience of the Mothers of Peace in Turkey" (2007) that there is a hierarchy between the mothers of guerrilla having lost their lives and the mothers of soldiers. Aslan states that motherhood in Turkey is "not a universal bond between women anymore" and it is organized as two categories: "genuine" mothers and "so-called" mothers. She also points out that the Peace Mothers are alienated because of this categorization (Aslan 2017).

It also should be remembered that the Peace Mothers are the first witnesses of the losses in 1990s. In this sense, it can be argued that they bring their testimonies and demands to public sphere whilst they combine their combat experiences with political demands of the Kurdish movement. In fact, the reason why the Peace Mothers have always been the target of state violence is this bond. The Peace Mothers, most of whom are over 60, have been taken into custody and/or arrested several times.[65] However, in any case they have an important role in terms of constructing a discourse about guerrilla's losses and carrying this voice to public sphere.

5.4.3. Relatives of the Dead and MEYA-DER

Mesopotamia Association of Assistance and Solidarity for Families with Lost Relatives (MEYA-DER) was established in 2007 in Northern Kurdistan by relatives of PKK guerrillas who lost their lives. The head office of the association is in Diyarbakır and has branches in many cities such as İstanbul, Dersim, and Şırnak. However, like many NGOs operating in Turkey and Kurdistan, MEYA-DER was also shut down on November 21, 2016 by decree law put into effect after the

[65]The reason why one of the Peace Mothers was taken under custody was sending container to guerilla martyrs' cemetery. I will explain it in the martyrs' cemetery section. One of the Peace Mothers members taken under custody is 71 year-old Hava Kıran https://www.evrensel.net/haber/311863/baris-annesi-havva-kiran-4-gundur-gozaltinda and the other is 83 year-old Dilşah Özgen access date 02.06.2017http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/177761-baris-annesi-dilsah-ozgen-gozaltina-alindi [access date 02.06.2017]

coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016. Nevertheless, the members of the association are still active.

MEYA-DER, which has been operating for about ten years, has been aiming to act with solidarity for families of guerrillas, who lost their lives, and to clarify and archive credentials of the guerrillas, who died in the battle having continued for more than forty years. For this reason, the association's operation is broad in scope. MEYA-DER actively takes part in the whole process, from clarification of credentials of the guerrillas to taking the corpses of guerrillas, from transfer of the corpses to the families to burial and gathering people to express condolence. The corpses of guerrillas are first sent to institute of forensic medicine. The families of deceased guerrillas get the news generally through the press. But, last ten years, the families mostly apply to MEYA-DER to confirm the accuracy of the news. MEYA-DER supports families during the process of applying to forensic medicine institutes. However, the families sometimes get the news directly from MEYA-DER. For this reason, MEYA-DER is engaged in a difficult process such as ensuring the flow of healthy information between these families and state institutions. Fatma, who is staff member of MEYA-DER and I met in Diyarbakır, explains the operation of the association:

> MEYA-DER Amed is the head office of Kurdistan (other branches). If there is a martyr, it does not matter if it is in Rojava or in South (Kurdistan), we get the registrations from all around and distribute them to the cities. We distribute them to our branches in the cities. Then we inform the families in person. (Fatma 2016).

It is certain that MEYA-DER makes the difficult process after losing someone easier in Kurdistan, but in the meantime, association staff faces serious problems. Foremost among these is informing families about death. Fatma expresses this situation as:

> We adopt that as a principle: We never tell the bad news to families on the phone because it hurts a lot. It is contrary to our principle to tell the family that their child is martyred. That's why we establish a committee. For example, we, the mothers [mothers of guerrillas who lost their lives] in Amed or other cities, staff of MEYA-DER, call the representative, if there is any, or fellows from [DBP and/or HDP] provincial administration and visit the family together. First, we learn about the family, whether their child is outside[66] or not and for how many years [they have been outside]. We see how the land lies. After that, we, unfortunately, tell the bad news. So, sometimes I get angry at myself since I

[66] In Kurdish society, the ones who joins guerrilla are referred as "derve", which means the one who is outside.

> joined MEYA-DER because I look like the angel of death when I tell the news. When the fellows pick up my phone, I get this response: "Well, honestly, we are afraid. Is there anything bad?" And this is too bad, as well. (2016)

Her narration shows how the process of mourning is institutionalized in Kurdistan. It is a process that many different organizations such as members of associations, initiatives and political parties have joined together. Although it is very difficult for member of MEYA-DER to inform families about their lost, this solidarity with families whose children lost their lives, has a significant role to cope with loss.

On the other hand, archive constitute important part of MEYA-DER's studies. They archive credentials of the guerrillas in different ways. There are different committees that study to create an archive about guerrillas losses. Some of them focus on the guerrillas who lost their lives in 1990s.

They collect information about these guerrillas. They have started to find their graves with the Peace Mothers and Human Rights Association (IHD). Therefore, the search was conducted through various mapping methods, information given by families as well as information given by the villagers. Then, traced dead bodies in particularly last ten years; collecting the objects belonging to the dead. They bought the dead and collected them in the central cemeteries. As of 2010, research studies on mass graves have been carried out in North Kurdistan. Many mass graves believed to contain the remains of members of PKK have been discovered in different cities like Diyarbakır, Şirnak and Bitlis, where the conflict was intensive in 1990s. They opened these graves and they carried to the center cemeteries and rebury them.

Figure 1: Human *remains found at a mass grave site in Şırnak 2014 and members of MEYA-DER said that the bones belong to 12 PKK guerrillas.*[67]

This study is a kind of forensic investigation to identify and rebury dead. As part of these studies they found many mass graves in different cities. Similar studies have been conducted in the different countries have experienced the periods of intense violence such as Spain, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Spain, Rwanda, Cambodia, and Korea in the last two decades. Bodies have been exhumed for the needs of criminal investigation for these countries. Crossland argues that "forensic and humanitarian exhumation is both located both as part of a tradition of judicial inquiry and as a necessary step in the completing of funerary ritual" (2015: 241). Excavation take place in order to prosecute legal cases, to provide bodies for relatives and to allow grieving in these countries. Although the same process has started in North Kurdistan, forensic products did not provide same consequences in the context of Kurdistan. Forensic studies stopped after the conflicts started again in 2015, so MEYA-DER also gave up studying on mass graves.

[67] http://www.aksam.com.tr/guncel/kato-daginda-toplu-mezar-bulundu/haber-321902 [access date 02.08.2017]

Even if the fact that thousands of people died in the battle in Kurdistan is a secret in public sphere, the only agenda for MEYA-DER staff, as well as thousands of families, is these deaths. Among their daily tasks there are informing families about their children's death, washing the corpses, burying and dealing with the visits for condolence. In this sense, it can be said that MEYA-DER have destroyed the hierarchy of grief established by the state with its discourses, practices and institutionalize the mourning process for years. People now can mourn "properly" over guerrillas, who have been called as "terrorist" in public sphere and state's official discourses for years, with the support of the association. For this reason, association's members believe that MEYA-DER activities are regarded as a "sacred" duty, both for martyr families and in Kurdish community. Fatma expresses this as:

> But there is another thing. We have been going through the same process for, let's say, forty-forty-two years. Our association is like a mosque for me, for the community and for our party[68] because it is an association where families of all martyrs come together (2016).

On the other hand, it is a part of daily life for staff member of the association to inform the families about death of their children. She tells that relatives of martyrs may give different reactions during this process and that's why she has to act in a sensitive manner:

> We [act] in an appropriate way for MEYA-DER, the way we speak and treat families, our demeanor. This is very important since the families would be very sensitive in that period. I mean, a family who lost their child might react badly, slap you in the face, throw a punch, excuse me but they also might swear. At that moment, you must understand the pain of that family. It is difficult for them, too (Fatma, 2016).

This shows how their work is difficult both physically and psychologically. On the other hand, sometimes MEYA-DER becomes an institution which gathers the corpses. Fatma explains that hundreds of corpses of YPG (People's Protection Units) and YPJ (Women's Protection Units) guerrillas were taken by MEYA-DER from the border and were buried by MEYA-DER and the families in 2014 and 2015, the years when the conflicts had been still going on in Rojava:

> We have received lots of corpses since I joined. I mean, it is a very though and painful process. For example, the first month when I came here was February and the Kobane process[69] was on. Some days we receive four or five corpses,

[68]She refers to Kurdish Movement.
[69]He refers to 2015 when ISIS attacked Kobane.

> some days we come to Amed and send the corpses to other cities. For example, I often go to the border with the families to take the corpses. And sometimes we take corpses in Silopi, sometimes in Kızıltepe (Fatma, 2016).

In 2014 and 2015, when everybody hoped that negotiations between PKK and the state would start, the state made difficulties about taking the corpses from the border. The hierarchy of grief policy that the state has carried out in Kurdistan for years came to light once again with the YPG guerrilla Aziz Güler whose corpse had remained at the border for 60 days. Fatma who witnesses this process talks about it as follows:

> They enforce the law according to their will. They said they could not take any corpses from outside the border. Unfortunately, the martyr fellows are buried there. The corpses which could not be taken from outside the border are more than 200. They are waiting this process to end. If the process ends, if they open the borders, if permission is granted, everybody goes and gets the corpses (2016).

In this sense, members of MEYA-DER do not only care about guerrillas who lost their lives in the border of Turkey, they are interested in death bodies from different part of Kurdistan. For instance, in some cases, guerrillas from other part of Kurdistan lost their live in North Kurdistan, and member of MEYA-DER try to clarify their identity. Sometimes, they get information from guerrillas and contact their family to take the bodies. When I was in Diyarbakır, a group of guerrillas had lost their lives in Dersim. One of them was a woman and guerrillas from Dersim inform members of MEYA-DER that she is from Rojava. Then, they tried to contact with her family to come for DNA. The bodies were at Malatya Forensic Medicine Institute. Yilmaz told me that "her family was informed but they could not come to Turkey legally, if they would not come, she will be buried common grave". DNA fingerprinting for identification is a necessary procedure to take bodies. The Forensic Medicine Institute used DNA matching to confirm that the corpses belonged to the family. It is very common that after ten days if no one come for DNA matching, they bury the body to the common grave. Similarly, if DNA matching does not confirm, they also bury to the same grave. Her family could not cross the Rojava-Turkey border, and she was most likely buried to common grave without any headstone or name. According to MEYA-DER, there are uncountable numbers of guerrillas who have been buried in common grave.

As I stated before, washing the guerrilla's corpses is among the activities of MEYA-DER. The imams, who are also staff members of the association, wash the male corpses while the female ones are washed by female staff. Washing corpses is the most traumatic task for staff member of

MEYA-DER because most of the guerrilla corpses are brought to morgue as disintegrated.[70] Fatma says that it requires courage to wash the corpses, but, since it is a responsible for her, she "gets up the nerve" to wash. This is because, according to her, "taking part in the fight" requires this:

> When a female corpse comes, I help wash it but if it is a male one, I tell the imam that I want to see him before it is washed. Almost all bodies are destroyed. So, I get up the nerve. In the end, we all are a part of the fight. For this reason, we cannot collapse, we have to be strong. We have to put sentimentality aside, bear it and go into the room (2016).

She told me that she always tries to see the bodies to remember and record detail about them. She believes that this is a kind of struggle, so she defines herself as a fighter. In this sense, it can be said that her practice **is** a different type of archival work to create a memory about guerrillas losses. She is giving an example she witnessed:

> After going [inside], I told the imam that I wanted to look at it, take photographs. I went… he was white-skinned. There was nothing down the body from his neck. Oh, my dear… His body was so warm as if he was just martyred. But they poured something chemical to his head, just like we, women, pour hydrochloric acid to something and it cleans the dirt off. They poured something just like this; it melted all the flesh on his head and only his eyeballs and teeth were apparent. And also a pinch of hair was on his top (2016).[71]

Fatma's attitude shows how guerrilla bodies themselves became symbols for memory in that context. The anthropologist Katherine Verdery says that the dead bodies come with a background story:

> The background story enables us to identify the dead bodies with other people who have the same life. What their bodies had been through indicates the things which are desired to be done to those who share the same destiny with them when they are alive. Their bodies are both dead and alive. Even if they are physically dead, they are politically alive. Dead body and what has been done to

[70]Malatya Institute of Forensic Medicine is the institution where guerrilla corpses are sent most.

[71]MEYA-DER staff also reported that the corpses were severely destroyed in 2016 when the Sur war occurred. They said that in this period it was common that the dead body stayed on the ground for days and sometimes it was destroyed by animals, the body integrity was deteriorated severing and/or cutting off the head, legs or certain limbs, the dead body got shot for several times, it was undressed and exhibited, it was dragged by armored vehicles, the dead and/or alive body was passed over by armored vehicles. The imam, who washed the corpse in this period, says that he does not go to mosque anymore after he witnessed the torture the corpses went through since he believes that salat performed in a place where all these things happened will mean nothing in the eye of God. See: HDP, 2016 Sur Report: http://www.hdp.org.tr/images/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Surraporu.pdf , access date 02.06.2017 in addition, see: interview with the father of İsa Oran whose corpse was tortured: http://t24.com.tr/haber/sokaktaki-cenazesini-27-gun-sonra-teshis-eden-baba-oglumun-kafasi-yoktu-cenazeye-iskence-gunahtir,324826 [access date 02.06.2017]

> dead body is the most transparent side of politics. (Verdery, 1999 in Balta 2015:1)

On the other hand, the ill-treatment of dead bodies is not limited to this. As I mentioned before, the autopsy process starts, which turns into a torture for the families and affects their mental health deeply. Some families cannot get the corpse for months after they heard of death and the corpses are brought to morgues. Sometimes it takes months for DNA results to come out. Yılmaz refers to the autopsy process as follows:

> Autopsy is a torture itself, do you know that? The skull of dead person is divided into three, the whole brain is taken outside and the scalp is stitched again. The way it is stitched… the suture is as thick as a cable, they use it. They cut the body to pieces (2017).

Yılmaz uses these words to express that he cannot find a word to say for the atrocity she witnesses: "They sometimes tell us to talk in ceremonies[72] but we cannot find anything to say. I mean, it is an atrocity, a real atrocity" (2017).

As we have seen in the witness narratives, it is not possible to find a similar kind of torture to the dead bodies of the guerrillas. After three years without conflict, the saying that "are we going back to the nineties", which is often expressed in the public sphere with the resumption of the conflicts, shows that the politics of the nineties continues in many ways. Özge Leyla İspir expressed discomfort she felt about the saying with the question of "what goes back to nineties is the Kurdish problem or the west side" (İspir, 2012 in Ustundag 2015) since according to her, the nineties were already continuing in Kurdistan. It can be argued that these policies are suspended and/or interrupted time to time but it is impossible to say that the state has renounced them. At least we can see that the policies aimed at the lost guerrillas, which is the subject of this research, have never ended. The fact that the photographs of naked corpse of PKK guerrilla Kevser Eltürk, who was killed in August 2015, were shared in social media,[73] the fact that the corpse of 10 year-old Cemile Çağırga, who was killed in Cizre in September 2016, could not **be** buried because of curfew and kept in the refrigerator so that it will not spoilt,[74] and the fact that the police gives 5-kilo bones

[72]She refers to funerals and condolence visits.
[73]https://www.evrensel.net/haber/258456/fotografin-kevser-elturke-ait-oldugunu-dusunuyoruz [access date 02.06.2017]
[74]http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/363255/Caresizlige_abluka..._10_yasindaki_Cemile_nin_cesedi_buzdolabinda_saklandi.html access date 02.06.2017

in a plastic bag to 18 year-old Fırat Duymak, whose father was slaughtered in the basement in Cizre, and says "here, this is your father"[75] shows that the nineties is not a ghost from the past which threatens us. In the nineties when access to information was not so widespread, the photographs of guerrillas in which the head was torn down, and the body was stepped on hurt the memories of Kurds deeply. But it would not be exaggeration to suggest what happens today is beyond those images. Fatma, who works in MEYA-DER, expresses the difference as:

> Something happened and it is even beyond nineties. In the nineties, they would shoot you in the back or take you away and kill you. But now, they shoot in public regardless of whether it is a kid, an old person, or woman; they shoot unborn baby, pregnant woman (2016).

We have limited information about how badly the bodies of dead guerrillas were treated in nineties because most of them could not be taken by their families. They were buried where they died by either guerrillas, or the country folk, or woodsmen. As some examples show, some of them were not buried at all; they were left out where they died. However, we know that they are explicitly subjected to hierarchy of grief. We also know that the lost guerrillas, whose lives and losses are deemed worthless and therefore whose grief is obstructed, are completely excluded from the public sphere. As I mentioned earlier, although there is a certain discourse in the public sphere about causing loss by force and/or killing in different ways, not a single word has been said about the lost guerrillas. Relatives of the lost guerrillas are still muted in public sphere. As Ardner suggests, relatives of the lost guerrillas being silent is caused by the fact that they were muted by certain power associations and dominant discourses. Therefore, relatives of deceased guerrillas have been a huge muted group in Turkey. Even the relatives of lost guerrillas were prohibited from talking about it. This subject, as I noted before, is a big taboo in the academy. However, even though they were muted, as it can be concluded from the interviews, the memory of the nineties is still alive in these people's mind. Indeed, they convey all details about those who lost their lives in nineties since, as Üstündağ says, "The '90s are carved in the geography and in the body here" (Üstündağ, 2015: 13-19)

For all these reasons, the operations of MEYA-DER are crucial and this is not about solving the problems faced by the relatives of the lost guerrillas; it is important for death to be deemed

[75]http://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2016/08/07/babami-oldurenler-idam-edilmesin/ [access date 02.06.2017]

precious, to become a part of the social sphere and to be respected again. Thus, while solving social problems and articulating the Kurdish Movement, they also form a social ground on which the loss of guerrilla is respected in the public sphere. In addition, since all the narratives by the MEYA-DER staff are about relatives of deceased guerrillas, it is also very important in terms of the ways in which the experience after the loss is understood. While narrating, neither Fatma nor Yılmaz used a language that focuses merely on pain. They see themselves as "a part of the fight" and explain their opinion on politics:

> There are forty million Kurds, and you cannot kill all the forty million. Today, for instance, two or three hundred people were slaughtered in Cizre; hundred people were slaughtered in Sur. You cannot kill all Kurdish people this way. On the contrary, the Kurds will become furious and keep the combat. That is to say, we have seen many leaders come and go. We look back; Kenan was there, Çiller was there, Doğan was there. All of them came and went. … The only thing that resents me is that I am being searched and my ID is being checked while I was entering into my street in my hometown. Finally, I turned to the police officer and said "this, too, shall pass". That is exactly what I said (Fatma, 2016).

For this reason, it cannot be said that the grief completely disrupts the lives of the relatives of deceased guerrillas although they mourn all the time because they could not "properly" say goodbye to their deceased ones. However, it is worth noting that this is not true for all relatives. As Gandsman (2013) underlines that we should always keep in mind different fragmentations about certain experiences. However, all the guerrilla relatives I interviewed were people who fight in different circles within the Kurdish Movement.[76] Therefore, they define themselves as a part of Kurdish Movement. Therefore, there are differences between their ideas and practice from others who may against to Kurdish Movement although children lost their lives in PKK's struggle. Indeed; Göral argues that distance from the movement directly affects the practice of mourning:

> In the narratives of guerrilla relatives who are relatively distant to the [Kurdish] Movement, melancholy, feeling of weakness and personal pain can be observed while the relatives closer to the Movement express melancholy with anger, personal pain with social memory, and the pain for those they lost with politics together. … Therefore, being a relative of a deceased guerrilla means not only having the position of a relative in pain, but also having the political position which enables you to express certain political demands. (2016)

[76]As I was forming research sample, I actually did not use such categorization; however, it emerged since a part of research was focusing on only Lice and also I reached the interviewers through MEYA-DER.

However, I could not interview the people who are against the PKK's struggle, so different researches should further be conducted about differences between these two groups would show the varieties about their attitudes and ideas. To conclude, MEYA-DER has a significant role not only in institutionalization of mourning process, but also in construction of memory about guerrillas losses. Through these practices MEYA-DER attempts to struggle against hierarchy of grief in Turkey.

CHAPTER 6

POLİTİCAL MOURNING IN KURDISH SOCİETY

Academic literature on the 1990s usually focuses on the types of domination established by the Turkish state and the strategies employed by the PKK. The literature seems to deal with the war in Kurdistan in terms of its historic and global implications, whereas the impact of this vicious war on the daily life, pain and suffering of the people caused by violence and the tragedy people experienced call for different approaches. My research focuses on the effects of the war on the subjects and their daily experiences and practices. This chapter will first explore the life stories of certain guerillas who were not duly put to rest in the 1990s and the experiences of their loved ones. I will focus specifically on the resistance practices of the Peace Mothers and the Mesopotamia Association of Assistance and Solidarity for Families with Lost Relatives. I will also look into the ways in which the relatives of lost guerillas in Lice and Dersim overcame their grief through certain mourning practices. As mentioned before, in 2013, the bodies of guerillas that had been buried around combat sites were exhumed and transferred to cemeteries. I will also discuss the affect of burial sites and their relation to the relatives of lost guerillas. The structure of these sites, which constitute an example of material culture, as well as their relation to collective memory will be discussed. Finally, the destruction of cemeteries and the significance such destruction holds for the relatives of guerillas will be studied. There are many common points in the interviews. These are the experiences of the relatives of the lost people, such as the process of dealing with the state, the failure to take the corpses, not to mourn, the problems among family members, the struggle to find the corpses of lost relatives and the relocation of corpses by constructing the cemeteries.

6.1. The Houses of Condolence and Mourning

One of the main operations of MEYA-DER is to organize condolence visits for the deceased guerrillas. People come together in *the houses of mourning* (Yas Evleri) to express condolences after funerals. The buildings such as the houses of mourning are not common in Dersim. In Dersim, condolence visits and ceremonies after death usually take place in *djemevis*. But houses of mourning are established in almost every street in Diyarbakır. Also in other cities of Kurdistan, there are some buildings similar to houses of mourning which are constructed only for condolence visits. These houses are the places where condolences are expressed not only for guerrillas, but

also for “normal” deaths. In these days when conflicts are still going on, a condolence visit takes place in the houses almost every day in Diyarbakır, a city with a high rate of active guerrilla participation. The process of condolence is a long process which starts from taking the corpse and burying it and continues with people gathering in the house of mourning. As Fatma has said before, after the ID of the deceased guerrilla is clarified, the guerrilla’s family takes the corpse to their hometown. People generally come together for condolences where the corpse is buried. However, in some cases when there is not a corpse, people come together if there is an official statement made by the PKK about the death of the person. Sometimes more than one name is reported in the statements. Therefore, people express their condolences for all the deceased at the same time. In this case that the corpse is absent but families, relatives and patriotic Kurds visit the family to offer condolences like on other condolence visits. When the corpse is present, the funeral is the starting point of the condolence process:

> After we take the corpses from the morgue, we take them to be buried. We always go to the cemetery together as families. There is also mass participation. Whoever hears the news joins the funeral. Sometimes even the press shows up. After the burial, we or related family members make speeches. We talk about that person’s challenges, about him / her and his / her death. We give condolences the next day. (Yılmaz, 2017)

Family of the deceased guerrilla and MEYA-DER staff stood on wait here to greet the visitors for three days. MEYA-DER staff member Yılmaz elaborated on this process of giving condolences as follows:

> We are the first ones to arrive at the house of mourning. One or two people from our foundation will definitely be there. One of our mothers comes, too. When we go there, we do everything ourselves; we bring the drinks, chairs, place them around, etc. Sometimes we come across other families. We prepare te**a** for them, if they are in need, we help cover their expenses. But some families decline. They cover their expenses themselves. If one family is not doing well economically, we cover their drink and food expenses for three days. Other times, families readily provide financial support to each other, should one of them be in need of help. (2017)

As seen here, mourning practices are institutionalized in Kurdistan. Relatives of the deceased together with the members of MEYA-DER, whose main goal is to institutionalize the event, put the whole process into a system. It is very important in many ways that condolences are given in houses of mourning. First, the relatives of the deceased find a chance to get together and a platform,

which allows them to share their experiences. This needs to be shared, as it can help them ease the pain of a lost one, which is a traumatic experience. In these places, a phenomenon occurs that is called the "transmission of affect" (Brennnan, 2004 in 2015: 44) by Teresa Brennan. Relatives of the deceased, their acquaintances and people who share similar experiences can console one another, and have the chance to talk about the memories of the deceased. This is an important experience, as it allows the transmission of memory. The narratives provided here were relayed from person to person and sometimes from generation to generation. Thus, a collective memory regarding the loss of human life is formed. In this regard, houses of mourning can be claimed to be the first place where the idea of human loss finds a collective ground. I have not seen any greater crowd giving condolences than when I first stumbled upon the Temur Mourning House in the Kayapınar District of Diyarbakır, when I was there for the purposes of this research.

One day there were guerrillas giving condolences. It was in a big, two-story building. I called a mother of a guerrilla with whom I wanted to speak. She said she was in the house of mourning and there was a huge crowd in front of the house. Men were sitting on the first floor. The door to the second floor was behind the building. I reached the second floor. There were divided rooms, but one of them was bigger than the others. There were thousands of women sitting in the rooms decorated with rugs. As I entered, I did not know what to say to these women. I could not distinguish the ones to whom I should give condolences. This was a place where a communal mourning was occurring, there was anonymity, the boundary between the relatives of the deceased and others, who were only there to accompany them through their pain, was blurred out of existence. The lost was either everyone's or no one's. Because here in this instance, a person or people mourning over their recently lost loved ones was not the only thing to take note of. Since the 1990s, this community has been living under a sustained feeling of losing members of their society; in this way *houses of mourning* have become a part of their everyday life. It is not only old mothers who come to these houses: young women with their babies, single women and even girls, too. Some of the women were minding their children, some changing diapers, some were performing salad, and others were talking and / or laughing. After some time, they went downstairs together to eat and asked me if I was hungry. This short experience showed me that these people did much more than lament for the dead, feeling sorry for themselves and mourning in pain in these houses.

Additionally, the themes of loss and melancholy are not the only ones touched upon here. Daily life and current politics make up other topics of discourse. Therefore, that is also a part of the public space, where they are building foundations for politics. The fact that people who lost their loved ones in different time periods give condolences to each other collectively in a shared time-zone is quite important for relatives. Deniz, who exchanged condolences for her husband 18 years after his death, expressed the process she went through with a calm voice as follows:

> People from MEYA-DER came and told us they arrived and that they buried him in the martyrdom. They asked to exchange condolences in the house of mourning, told me it was my decision if I wanted to do it or not. How could I have said no! It was a place for my head. We exchanged condolences for three days in Amed. Friends from different places visited. Condolences were also given for the martyrs who fell at different times. Their families were there, too. We sat together for three days, many people came, it was very crowded. This was in the Temur Mourning House, which is a really large place; but it still was not enough. The common folk were there for me. (2016)

As Deniz mentioned, these mourning houses are often occupied with common folk, as well as mourners. This shows that the soul, ideology, public personality and political identity of the deceased are being safeguarded by community members. Therefore, *houses of mourning* are a part of the public sphere and thanks to the practices upheld there, they are now becoming places of the re-evaluation of values attributed to the losses suffered after continuous exposure to the hierarchy of grief to which they were subject. These people, whose mourning was not seen as genuine, are now gaining acknowledgement in the public eye. The fact that people exchange condolences for both "normal" and "abnormal" deaths in the same *house of mourning* is actually a practice completely working against the hierarchy of grief by itself. Therefore, practices that appeared within the private body of mourning houses construct a common ground, as well as constitute a collective memory regarding the loss of guerrillas. Needless to say, this new memory will, both in practice and on a perceptual level, completely take over the currently dominating memory, which the government had formulated upon the frame of guerrilla depictions such as "terrorist" and "leech."

6.2. Mourning in the Shadow of State Violence

"Light sorrows speak, but deeper ones are dumb"
Lucius Annaeus Seneca

All of the relatives of the missing people report that they had become the target of state violence in the 1990s. It can be argued that while some of the missing people became politicized after they have joined the PKK, some of the families have said that their children joined the PKK because they were already politicized. However, in the course of disappearances, all families are subjected to a multifaceted state violence. In addition, family members who have not heard from their relatives in a long time experience many hardships among themselves and with the ones around them. In this sense, they are experiencing a fragile, lonely and insecure process. Finally, after they receive the news of the death of their relative, the relatives of the mising people who have not been able to get the corpse are subjected to a multifaceted violence such as physical, psychological and symbolic violence.

It was revealed that the family members were subjected to intense violence because their relatives joined the PKK. As Sarya's example shows, the state deals with the remaining family members in order to take control of the person who has become guerrilla. After Sarya's husband was kidnapped by JITEM in Diyarbakır, they met his son Amed and threatened him:

> Of course, Amed gets the news as soon as they take him. They take him right into JITEM. JITEM. (2016)

Similarly, when Berzan joined the PKK, his father was constantly being detained. He was kidnapped by JITEM and no one heard from him for 27 days. Mustafa describes those days as follows:

> They burned our barns, took my father away. For 15 days, we had no idea where my father was. We had not been able to find him for 15 days. Eventually we found a connection and contacted people in JITEM. In those days, they were kidnapping and executing people. JITEM asked us for about 13 thousand liras. We sold our cows. At that time, we reached my father through Abdulkadir Aksu who worked in the ministry of interior at that time. They said he was at the Hazro

> military prison. On the 27th day, he was released. That's how my father was arrested and punished for three years. (2016)

Deniz, whose husband became a guerilla, explained that she migrated to İstanbul from Diyarbakır because the police constantly invaded her house after her husband joined the PKK. Ruken, whose father is also guerrilla, recounted that they were constantly exposed to police violence in Istanbul and Iskenderun. Besides the physical and psychological violence that came with that, Ruken said that she lost a few photographs of her father's, who means a lot to her:

> Once the police invaded our home. There were photos of my father at home. Photographs of him as a guerilla. When the police came my auntie panicked and threw the photos in the stove. So we do not have a picture of my father as a guerilla. (2016)

After the relatives of the missing people hear of their relatives' disappearances, the violence of the state further increases. As a result of the negotiations, it was revealed that the families who applied to the prosecutors' offices and outposts in order to take the corpses of their relatives during this period were exposed to physical, verbal and psychological violence in all institutions. Deniz also says that the state uses deaths as a psychological method of war and adds: the people from outpost said, "we were looking for it everywhere, we could not find it so far, now that we've got it the family can come to take it" (2016). They also say that they submitted petitions to receive the corpses of their relatives but they were not concluded for years. Similarly, the families who gave DNA samples have not been able to obtain any results for years.

On the other hand, relatives of missing people are exposed to serious psychological pressure during periods when they do not hear from their relatives. There is constant speculation about their relatives. This is what the state is doing intentionally, while acquaintances do the same. Sometimes these are done by phone, sometimes by letters, sometimes by rumors. They often take the form of someone’s child being dead. This creates serious distrust among families. Because of these rumors, most of the relatives who had missing loved ones that they did not immediately trust the news that their loved one was dead when they received it. On the other hand, very serious problems arise among family members in this process: people who hear the news don’t tell the other family members about them, and some family members do not go to claim the corpse. Deniz told that when her husband died, his family did not claim the corpse so she did not talk to them for years:

> Şêxmus had became martyr [having a deep sigh]. His mother and father said that they were afraid to go. They said they would not go. We don't care what happened to him, he already showed what way he was going about. They said they would kill us too if we went too. They did not go. Nobody went to claim it. (2016)

Ruken's family has a similar problem. Her mother, her auntie and uncle, who heard of her father's death, did not believe it and did not tell anyone. Years later, when her grandmother heard it, she reacted negatively. Ruken says it caused big problems in the family. Also, in this process, there are also occasional problems between the relatives of the missing people and the Kurdish Movement. Relatives of the missing people occasionally voiced their displeasure with them for not telling them about their death in time.

In addition, the relatives of the missing people keep the difficulties they had to themselves both for security reasons and so as not to harm their children. This makes them feel lonely for a long time. In some cases, they do not even know why they did not share it with anyone:

> I have never told anyone, any friends of mine about what I have went through. I just told a friend last year, that's it. That's when we found my father's body. Nobody knows. I did not mention it to patriotic friends either. I do not even know why I didn't. (2016)

On the other hand, Ruken tells us that her mother repeatedly said, "He left us." Ruken herself, though she does not voice it, feels frustrated with her father. When she went to Hazro to receive her father's corpse in 2015, she realized that all the villagers knew her father. She recounts that even the villagers knew him as follows:

> My father saw my photo before he became a martyr. I met a man there, my dad's close friend is also a militiaman. He got my photo from a man in Istanbul. So they sent it to my dad. My father had seen my photo. (2016)

She also says she is very happy to hear that her father was a regional commander at the time. After learning this, it seems as if she has made peace with his suffering. The story of Ruken reminds us of the film "I Flew You Stayed" (Arslan, 2012)[77]). In this film, we see the internal conflicts of a

[77] "I Flew You Stayed" is a documentary film by Mizgin Arslan as a reflexive narrative. In the film Arslan is looking for her father whom she has never seen. She seeks her father's grave (Koçer, 2016: 131)

woman as she traces her father who is a guerrilla that she has never seen. On the one hand, we witness her love for her father, her longing, and on the other hand, her indulgences, how she accuses her father, and the anger she has for him.

As a matter of fact, it is not only in the example of Ruken that the rest of the people keep talking to the ones who go away. Most of the relatives of missing people sometimes recall the death, get angry with them and sometimes commiserate with them. Deniz does not go to get the corpse even if she knows where it is after she hears of her husband's death. Although she said that she did not go because she was angry with his family who did not claim his body and she could not stand seeing him dead, her narratives made me feel like she was displeased with her husband. Also, the mother of Peri, who lost her life by being under an avalanche expressed that she was very angry with Peri when she left.

6.3. Immortal Mourning

However, the biggest of all these problems is undoubtedly the fact that the corpses could not be retrieved. None of the parents can get the corpses. Most of them cannot get them even though they have heard of the death, and have taken action to get the cropse. According to the narratives, it can be concluded that the policy of gravelessness in Kurdistan in the nineties was put into effect by the state as a strategy of war. Because the graves are not only places that keep alive the individual moment, but also the places that "ensures the preservation of the existence of the group makes in a historicity that transcends the moment" (Bozarslan 2014: 10 in Göral, 2016: 130). In order to prevent the formation of social memories about the guerillas, getting their corpses is banned openly and publicly. It is possible to see this in Rihan's experience of going from Diyarbakir to Lice and to a nearby village and finally climbing the mountain to visit her son's grave after 18 years:

> He had stayed in the place for five days in winter, and his blood had just flowed. There were mines around him, which were put there for the other five to step on them and die, who came there to get the other corpses of the two. There was a sergeant named Zülfükar who said the following: "you are giving birth to your bastards and letting them out, and they end up being terrorists. Why are you here? I told you yesterday not to come. I will not give you them as long as I am here. (2016)

Rihan tells us that her child Piling's corpse remained on the ground for five days. According to Rihan's narrative, the state, which laid the dead body around with mines, planned that the other five would die in the mines that came to take it at night. So, the dead bodies of Dara and Piling cannot be buried or taken by their families lest they risk death as well. The villagers are also prevented from taking it. Rihan and her husband are exposed to profanity in the outpost and insults. As if this weren't enough, the Sergeant Major threatened the mother and father saying, "You cannot get the corpse as long as I live in this land." Piling's dead body was described as a body belonging to a "terrorist" that did not deserve to be buried, and this body was also used as a weapon against his mother and father who suffered at the same time. According to Rihan, her son's not being buried was a sign of the state's revenge:

> [The ones in the outpost] understood that Dara's family was not patriotic. The family went away, which was a winning tool for this outpost. They took advantage of this and said that they could only get their son. They knew that I couldn't make it without Piling. I said that if I was going to get him out of there, I would get them both, or I wouldn't get any of them because I swore at the head of my graves. "Just as I swore I was following your traces, I will not leave you here alone, I will not leave you alone" I swore [crying]. (2016)

Another example that shows this policy of the state clearly is that Sarya's son Amed and Yıldız's brother Rêdûr were left exposed in the mountain for 15 years together with the corpses of a group of guerrillas. Sarya talks about this as follows:

> Those corpses were on the surface, not buried! They were throwing something out on them *qijik mijik avitibune ser*! [They threw brushwood on them] *Ay ay lewooo qijik mijik avitibune ser*! [screaming and crying]. (2016)

After 15 years, Sarya says that when the gurillas went there with her brother, there were no corpses left, and there were only clothes and bones. She said they identified Amed from the diary he kept. It turns out to be him because he writes about his family and his fellow villagers. Yıldız has the same fate with Amed at the same place.

As we can see, it is mourning's biggest obstacle that they were left unburied, exposed and neglected. In ancient Greek (Çelgin, 2011, 32-33), "the word "acedeo" meaning "neglect, not care, ignore" and "acedentos" or "unburied, left out" are etymologically and semantically related. Again,

there is a similar relation between the word "acedia" (Kalaycı, 2014: 202) which is often used in the mourning literature and which Benjamin uses to mean melancholy, and the word "kedia" meaning "funeral". For that reason, burying, not leaving out, not neglecting means showing care and respect. And again, burying, not leaving out, and not neglecting is directly related to mourning. Being buried is the first condition for mourning in this respect. However, as seen in the example of Amed and Berzan, in the nineties, many PKK guerillas were left out, ignored and their mourning was prevented.

> We heard in the evening in May, and we had condolences in the morning. It was very crowded at home then. But there was no body, no corpse, an immortal mourning! (Yıldız, 2016)

I asked Yıldız if they sent condolences when they heard the news of death, and she answers: the mourning process is very painful, since the state did not allow it in the nineties and they could not retrieve the corpses. After hearing the news, many relatives of lost people expressed condolences to the people nearby, but it did not function as a ground to suffer. As a matter of fact, although most families send condolences, they still could not be certain of his death. In addition, all the condolences took place at home in this period. When the condolence (*taziye*) takes place in the house, in some cases the police invade the house and try to prevent the event. Receiving her son's death news on television, Rihan conveys this violence to which she was exposed as follows:

> On the sixth day of our mourning, the policemen invaded our house. Daddy said, 'What is this crowd? Who told you that your son was murdered? "If you disturb people with their neighbors, we will interrogate you" they said. (2016)

In some cases, condolences (taziye) are not performed. The main reason for this is again pressure and fear:

> Let alone condolences, we were could not even at our house. Even crying was forbidden, which became locked in our hearts. Crying, anger, pain is all we have left in our hearts! We did not mourn because they kept invading all the time. When we heard news of [death], they invaded the house on that day. (2016)

As compared to people in Dersim, those in Diyarbakir experienced these invasions intensively. Especially in places such as Lice, Kulp and Silvan, which have been the centers of the PKK struggle since the nineties, this violence is getting worse. It is also possible to see this violence in

the "Lice Wildness Report" published in 2016. In the book, which focuses on the testimony of a teacher working in Lice in the first half of the nineties, it is possible to see the different ferocious aspects of the burning of houses, bombardment and executions on the street. It is possible to see this in a sentence in which this savagery is transmitted everyday life:

> We have been left without bread for three days because of the burning of bakeries, grocery stores, markets. The people whose houses were not burnt could manage it. Hundreds of families were homeless. (Cantekin, 2016: 86)

6.4. Gender and Mourning

Close relatives of 10 guerrillas were interviewed under the scope of this research. Three of the interviewees were mothers of the deceased guerrillas; one was a father, one an older brother, one sister, two younger brothers, one spouse and one daughter. In this chapter, I will discuss the role of gender that the guerillas struggle through in their stories, and its role in the mourning process through the time and space. Then, based on the testimonies and experiences of the relatives, I will focus upon women's and men's practices of mourning.

There are many common points between how the guerrillas are portrayed in their relatives' narratives during my interviews with them. First, their relatives describe that all the guerrillas had been subjected to state violence before they joined the PKK. Many of their family members were taken into custody / arrested. Most of the Guerrillas who were participating in the first half of the nineties when the war was fierce in Kurdistan were men. Although all of them joined the PKK in their youth,78 many of them were male. I was able to interview only two families of female guerrillas, and both in Dersim. It is related to religion that Alevi women take on more active roles in society than Sunni women. Based on my research, it would seem that women are more active than men in the mourning process. Also, if their children participated in the PKK, many women, as mothers, wives and sisters, tried to contact them for years and went after them. Sarya mentions this as follows:

[78]All of whom were below 25, some examples can be as low as 16.

> I saw him on and around the mountains. He was not close. We kept in touch. He would keep us in the know and tell us whoever was coming and going, if they were from our village or not, who fell a martyr and so forth (Sarya, 2016).

Many of these women had already taken part in political actions in the publicspace So, they were readily exposed to the violence of the state. The Peace Mothers is a fitting example here. Also, many members of MEYAD-ER are women. Duzgun (2013)79 argues that women are constructed as mourners in all wars. Similarly, according to Breteque, mostly women express sad feelings in daily life and at funerals (2012: 129 and 2016: 51-53) in the Kurdish / Yezidi community. In North Kurdistan, women are in the front of almost all the funeral ceremonies and condolence pratices. In some cases, the coffin is even carried by women.

[79] http: / / womeninwar.org / wordpress / wp-content / uploads / 2015 / 08 / Beirut / 7 / 1.pdf [access date 10.08.2017]

CHAPTER 7

CEMETERIES

Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery, located in the town of Lice in Diyarbakır, was established in 2013, when negotiations between the PKK and the state began. Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery is the first PKK cemetery to be built in Northern Kurdistan, although similar cemeteries where PKK guerrillas were buried had previously been established in Southern Kurdistan and in Kandil and other areas where the guerrillas stayed. In the same year, these cemeteries were built in thirteen different places such as Dersim, Şırnak and Bitlis. These cemeteries were largely destroyed by the state since the end of the non-conflict in 2015. In this chapter, I will focus on the building processes of Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery in Lice and Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery in Dersim. I will also examine the practices in these cemeteries and what these places mean to the relativves of the missing people, through the narratives of the relatives of missing people and with those working in these places or those visiting them. In connection with this, I will also focus on how these spaces influence the mourning practice. Next, by examining the physical structure of these cemeteries, which are examples of material culture, I will discuss what they mean to the Kurds in symbolic terms. In connection with this, I will focus on both the sense of the space and how these cemeteries, in regards to the relationship between man and a sense of space, form a collective memory both for the senses and for the space itself. Similarly, in this chapter, I will attempt to find out what the perception of the interviewees about martyrs and martyrdom is. Finally, I will deal with the destruction of these cemeteries and its effects on the relatives of the missing people.

7.1. Construction of Cemeteries

On 21 March 2013, immediately after the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's call for ceasefire, the PKK announced that it had ended the conflict. After this date, the vast majority of the PKK guerillas in North Kurdistan left Turkey's borders and pulled into Southern Kurdistan. However, a certain number of guerrillas in this period remained in northern Kurdistan. The remaining guerrillas began building guerrilla cemeteries in northern Kurdistan between June 2013 and

August 2015, when the conflicts had (momentarily) ceased. Why were these cemeteries built? How were these cemeteries established? How were the guerrilla corpses found? How were the local people involved in this process? Why were these cemeteries constructed as "martyr cemeteries"?

7.1.1. Reasons for the Establishment of Cemeteries

Mehmet who had worked for three months in the construction of *Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Cemetery* in Lice tells about the reason for the establishment of the cemetery in Lice as follows:

> The graves of approximately 15-20 friends of mine were at the dam built at Kulp. They were buried there in ’95-’96. When a dam was built there, friends thought that their bones may have remained under the dam. (2016)

Mehmet, who was in contact with his brother during this period, also stated that the cemetery was built. According to this information, the guerrillas in Lice had no other choice to prevent the bones of guerillas who all lost their lives in the nineties from remaining under the dams. As a matter of fact, Mehmet says that there was no central decision taken by the PKK for the construction of guerrilla cemeteries at this time, and that the guerrillas in Lice had taken the initiative to act and it was only later that this decision was approved. As mentioned earlier, Rêber, the guerrilla commander in the area of Lice, lead this process. Rêber had lost his brother Eladin before joining the guerrillas, but the family could not reach his body. His brother Ahmet tells Rêber that it was very difficult to make this decision, and he could not sleep until he received news from the center of the movement:

> The dam would be built and the corpses needs to be moved as soon as possible, but he was not sure whether it was the right decision or not or how the movement would react. (2016)

Arslan maintains that "security dams" were being put into practice as part of the state's establishment of sovereignty in Kurdistan (2014: 64). As a matter of fact, with the dams established in Kurdistan, this place is not only unmanned, but also the transit points of the guerrillas were drowned under water in order to establish spatial dominance. Thus, the construction of the dams was also an attempt to hinder connections and communication among the guerrillas. But this

example I saw in Lice points to a different outcome of the dams that has not been discussed in the public space before. The dams built in Kurdistan also caused guerrilla cemeteries to be flooded. Another question about the guerrilla corpses is related to why the guerrilla corpses were not moved to the public cemeteries, and instead separate guerrillacemeteries were built. Mehmet answers this question as follows:

> They have to take official action in order to be brought to the public cemetery and be buried. There are only bones and they have to take these bones to forensic medicine for DNA testing, but for DNA testing the families should be known. What will the state do if the families are unknown, they will take the bones away and bury them somewhere else. (2006)

As you can see, under these conditions it has become compulsory for the guerrillas to build cemeteries. The Guerrillas began to research the whereabouts of graves of guerrillas who'd lost their lives in the nineties but whose burial grounds were unknown during the building process of the cemeteries. Mehmet explains to us that a commission was formed by the guerrillas in order to find guerrillas' corpses. First, the graves of the guerrillas who lost their lives in around Lice and Kulp in the nineties were found. Mehmet conveys the research process as follows:

> Often, it was the villagers who were telling us. At that time, most villagers were buried. The guards knew that they were buried by the state. Hevaller communicates with those who abandoned being guards, and so on. They combine all this information. They go to places where martyrdom was realized and they were buried. They started to exhume day and night. Let's say that we started with 5 people and then continued. For example, sometimes 10 corpses a day, sometimes 15 a day and sometimes 20 corpses a day were brought to martyrdom. They were bringing bones. (2016)

7.2. Moving the Corpses to the Cemeteries

The former guerillas in the prisons made great contributions to locating the corpses of guerrillas. They knew the grave sites of their friends who died in conflict in the nineties. In this period, they left certain signs so that they would easily find the graves later. When the cemeteries were established they shared this information with the guerrillas outside:

> For example, there was a tree, and we put a stone of that color, like this, we put dry trees on top of the graves. They were going to dig these places and usually

> they reached the corpses. Their locations were determined. They were digging a meter and 40 cm. Corpses were mostly wrapped in blankets. (Mehmet: 2016)

Mehmet says that the guerrilla diaries had a similar function in this period. They have found so many corpses by following the traces in these diaries.

Soon after the Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery was built in Lice, other guerrilla cemeteries started to be built in many parts of Kurdistan. The same process in Lice begins here too. One of these was the Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery which started to be built in Dersim the same year. Just like in Lice, the guerillas work here at first. But then the people became involved, too.

Sosin worked in the construction of Martyr Baran and Martyr Besu Cemetery and told me that the corpses were transferred to the cemetery with the help of villagers in the night:

> Of course, there were some cases in which we went in the middle of the night and came back with the corpses. They went out and brought the bodies from villages' mountains with the help of the villagers. (2016)

Deniz explained how her husband was taken from a village in Lice as if out of a scene in a film with the following words:

> A vehicle of hevals went and they took him, equipped with guns in the middle of the night. They talked there, both in the village he became a martyr and in the village, he stayed for 18 years. "He became a martyr by the hands of agents, the state. He stayed there for 18 years, we built a guerrillamartyrdom and now we are taking him there. Those who have any objections can come and talk to us about it" they said. (2006)

As you can see, though the guerrilla cemeteries were built out of necessity in the beginning, they developed a different dimension; the gurillas buried where they died were brought together there. It is possible to say that this practice spread elsewhere, and with its migration took on different meanings by the acceptance of this decision made by the local guerrillas of the PKK. After that, finding the grave sites and to go and carry the bodies became the main business of the guerrillas. Interesting events also took place during the process of retrieving the corpses:

> Of course, friends sometimes said there was something wrong. A friend told me that they learned later that a body they brought was not a body of a guerrilla but a body of an old man (laugh). (Binevş: 2016)

However, this process is not only the finding and burial of corpses, but also a process of creating an archive of the missing people.

Figure 2: Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery. When the locals are burying a guerrilla. (Photo by H. D. 2015)

7.2.1. The Process to Persuade the Relatives of the Dead

Generally, lost guerrilla graves are often found by the guerrillas, but sometimes it is the opposite. But in both cases, the other guerrillas often communicate with the remaining relatives of the lost. Sometimes the family and the guerrillas work together to find the corpse. Some families want to take the corpses of their relatives to their villages or towns where they live. However, like many of the interviewees revealed, the guerrillas insisted that the corpses were brought and buried in the guerrilla cemeteries. Rihan has travelled back and forth to the mountain in Lice for 15 years and now wants to take his son's corpse to the center of Diyarbakır. Moreover, he says that there are many guerillas in the cemetery there. He is insistent about his decision but it's not happening as such:

> I said, “no no I'll take him to Amed martyrdom, because I would visit every evening as I have been doing for 15 years and I cannot do this anymore.” He said, “dayê (mother) I will tell you something, but it's up to you if you will listen or not. There are no witnesses, your son said that your petition is still not concluded, and now it is concluded they will take the scoop and come over, you know the state, it will hit the scoop, and even mix the bones of them both. Then they will send their bones to İstanbul. You've been waiting for eight months for

> your petition to be concluded, and you will maybe wait eight more months, and for the DNA, too. Do not take it if you ask me, if you listen to me. Let the state give us a headache," he said. "No, you're deceiving meI will take it if the petition is approved," I said. "You get up tonight, we will not give your mum to you, she was your mother till now and let her be our mom tonight," they said to my son. I stayed with them that night. *Ez livir nerim kirin! Tu zani heval merêv nerim dikin! Min got erê arê* (They calm me down there. You know havals easily calms people down, I accepted to bury his body to that cemetery, I said ok ok (he laughs). (2016)

Deniz is experiencing a similar situation. The news from the guerillas reached Deniz, who hadn't seen the grave of her husband for 18 years. They say if she gives consent, we will take him to a guerrillacemetery. Her husband's family wants him taken, but Deniz opposes it because his family did not want him before. But the guerrillas insist on this and repeatedly call Deniz to go and bring the corpse:

> No, I said no. But in fact, I really wanted it too because I really, really wanted to go and visit him. (Deniz: 2016)

As you can see, the guerrillas communicate with the relatives of missing people, and succeed in convincing most people. As a matter of fact, many relatives of missing people oppose the burial of the corpse there, but later they are convinced that this is the right decision.

7.3. Cemeteries and the Boundaries of the State

On the other hand, in the process of building these two cemeteries, the state seems to be both absent and present. Sometimes it interferes with certain practices, while letting the building ceremonies, admitting the relocation of the corpses. Indeed, there are also communications that can be called negotiations between the state and the guerrillas:

> Rêber himself said, "the Lice district governor said that they would make an operation and come to martyrdom ". Tell them, "if you come to martyrdom you will not say that there is a process of negotiations. For us (for the PKK) martyrdom is the red line, if you come, if you come to martyrdom, we will also shoot the soldiers. But if you say that there are weapons and munitions, send a delegation of civilians over the cemetery and we will let them do their investigation, and nobody will interfere with them. But if military armed forces come, we are not ok with it. (Ahmet, 2016)

However, along with the construction of guerrilla cemeteries, news appeared in the press that "the PKK is hiding ammunition under these graves". After this shocking news, the state started to show its presence again. After the construction of Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery in Lice was over, the guerrillas planned to plant a statue of Mahsun Korkmaz (Agit) who is one of the PKK's first period commanders. However, the statue was demolished shortly after it was erected. Mehmet describes the attitude of the state in this process as follows:

> Haveller made that decision that they wanted to make an opening because they wanted to make an official declaration of martyrdom. But that martyrdom was accepted as a cemetery. So they did not destroy it, it was not hidden from the public. But that sculpture was not allowed and accepted by the state. They destroyed it. (2016)

Figure 3: Soldiers posing with one's foot stomped on the sculpture of Mahsun Korkmaz [80]

A similar event, more interestingly, takes place in Dersim. The guerrillas in Dersim wanted to erect the statue of Zeynep Kınacı (Zilan), who was among the first term staff of the PKK, in the middle of the graveyard, which was lost in Dersim in 1996. However, they were prevented from

[80] http: / / t24.com.tr / haber / licedeki-heykelin-basina-basan-askerin-o-fotografi-icin-kim-ne-dedi,268129 [access date 07.06.2017]

doing this. According to the story, the "sculpture was taken into custody on the way." Engellenmesini Binevş recounts the story as follows:

> There was a pool inside the martyrdom. Actually, there would have been a sculpture of Heval Zilan there. But the sculpture was caught on the way (laughing). So the pool was built there instead. (2016)

As we can see, the state condoned the establishment of guerrilla cemeteries in the period of conflict. In fact, the state's law enforcement officers sometimes even communicated with the guerrillas. However, as Mehmet pointed out, the state condoned the cemetery, however it strongly opposed the PKK symbols and their acceptance in the public realm. That's precisely what the ban on sculpture means. The state severely opposes the cemeteries becoming formal in the public realm with PKK symbols and value.

7.3.1. Cemeteries and Kurds' Feelings

Although most of the interviewees voiced the importance of establishing guerrilla cemeteries, Zarife, who has been both involved in the PKK struggle and who remained in prisons for years, approaches the situation differently. According to her, the establishment of cemeteries in a place like Dersim, where unordinary deaths have become continous, are not so important. In fact, according to her, the ones who were killed because of the resistance do not care about it at all:

> They do not have such troubles because they only care about winning. She answers the question of whether the survivors have such a concern, saying that the ones who died in Dersim did not have such a concern. For it is a very violent process of existence or destruction, they all died, are killed here. Then all of Dersim is a cemetery. (2016)

Zarife says that there is no need for places like this because of the dominant Alevi faith in Dersim. According to her, every place in Dersim is a temple; every place is a sanctuary:

> Already there is a memorial for every road and every mountain because of the Alevi belief rituals. Therefore, they have made a circle there with small stones. It is not only a place that reminds them of their bitterness, but also a place to worship. Because each one has become god. They have reached the God and have reached their own eternity. So, it is now a place of faith for them. They go there, sacrifice, kiss their tombstones, they cry but they will go back to life by experiencing a confrontation with themselves, saying that they wished we had the same fate because they died for these lands. (2016)

As mentioned earlier, the cemeteries began to be built by the guerrillas, but later the people also become involved in this process. Why did the people go there? What do these cemeteries mean for Kurdish people? In this process, Binevş who worked in Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery, with the guerrillas, details his days as follows:

> We started to work after the mission sharing. We were carrying sand, making mortar. But we were not always working, we were also laughing, having fun, sometimes we were teasing our friends. When it was lunchtime, of course 2-3 friends were cooking. We were sitting together and eating our food. There was a cigarette break too. (Binevş 2016)

Those who hear that guerrilla cemeteries are being built are starting to flock there. Mehmet says that some days 500 people visited the Lice cemetery. These practices around mourning thus turn into practices that insert the Kurds into the Kurdish movement. The corpses brought there are sometimes buried en-masse. The crowd may become even bigger during this period:

> Before the corpses were buried, the employees there attended a ceremony and prayers were being performed and the *al-fatehah* was read. But sometimes big ceremonies were being held with the participation of the people. For example, on the day when 27 *heval* were buried, a great ceremony was performed with the participation of one thousand and five hundred people. (Ahmet, 2016)

7.3.2. Everyday Life in the Cemetery

People do not come here only for rituals or work. Some come just because of their curiosity. However, as can be seen in their narrations, everybody who works came after work to this space. For instance, some people cook and some of them stand guard at night. Sosin underlines this as follows:

> However, everyone who came did not come here to work or to attend the ceremony. Some people came because they were curious. But as it turned out in the narratives, everyone who came here also worked in some way. For example, some of the visitors were cooking, some were staying overnight and guarding. (Sosin, 2016)

Interviewees reported that guerrilla cemeteries were different from other cemeteries in many ways:

> Sometimes we were performing theatrical plays. The songs were written. We had a dog. He never left the martyrdom. (Sosin, 2016)

Rihan expresses this difference as follows:

> Can you stay the night when you go to a normal cemetery, which is very different? No, you cannot. But when we went there we were staying at night, chatting around the fire we lit. (2016)

Ahmet explains this difference from another point of view:

> There is a difference between going to a normal cemetery and going to a martyrdom. Why? It's because they are all young people first. The people buried there are all young people. Some of their families do not know if they are alive or not, perhaps. (2016)

A guerrilla again describes the guerrilla losses and the mourning period in the Bakur documentary:

> Sometimes they ask us, there are so many martyrs, how do you live? We cannot sit and think about it. When we sit down and think about it, we cannot do it. The life does not go on after that point. Neither the heart nor the brain can stand the pain. Sometimes they are attracting us to training areas, where the war is less intense. Then I noticed how I tolerate all that. For example, I still cannot write about my friends who became martyrs. I did not feel it while I was alive. Now I feel like I cannot take it. I realized that you have to live every day, you have to stay up, which is the right thing to do. It kind of lightens all the other burdens. I do not know how you do it, it's nothing humane. Or I do not know how we do it; how do you keep that brain and heart balance? But I realized that you do not live with its burden. You just go through it. The moment you feel that burden, life will stop.[81]

[81] *Bakur* 2015, directed by Demirel and Ertugrul

Figure 4: A ceremony in guerillas cemetery

7.3.3. Relationship Between the Cemetery and Mourning

There is also a direct relationship between the practice of mourning and the cemeteries. In my interviews, the relatives of the missing people who have not been able to get the corpses of their relatives since the nineties are sharing condolences after the burial of the corpses in the guerrilla cemeteries. In particular, the relatives of the missing, who witnessed the taking and burial of the corpse, stated that the mourning period was completed for them after this date, which leads them to finally find peace to a large extent. Almost all of the interviewees agree= on this point:

> Before, they were always two people in the desert, in the mountain, alone. It was very difficult to get there. Now I'm comfortable. I can go even in the evening, if I want to go and visit it, if I don't want, I don't, I am relaxed. (2016)

Having not seen her husband's grave for 18 years, Deniz says she wants to buy land in the cemetery:

> I was very relieved after he was buried there. I was going there all the time. I keep my eye on it all the time. For example, I want to be there day and night. I know the land belongs to the villagers but I want the villagers to give me a land, I will make a room for myself, stay there, I want there to be my home and stay in martyrdom. (Deniz, 206)

7.3.4. Anonymity of Graves

PKK guerillas who were able to find a few hundred corpses of those who lost their lives during the war has been an ongoing process of over 40 years, moving the bodies one by one to the cemeteries, as it is very difficult to find bodies buried in the ground after long years, especially of the guerillas who were buried in mass graves, "dumped" in waste yards and who collectively died in the airstrikes. Therefore, most of the graves are anonymous, their occupiers unidentified. Neither dates of birth nor place of death are written on almost all of the gravestones at *Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery*. What is the significance of meanings in martyr cemeteries where bodies that cannot be clearly identified are buried? Are the properties of corpses "good to think" as symbols in Lévi-Strauss's words? (Lévi-Strauss 1991, 89)

Figure 5: Bitlis Şêccuman Cemetery, composed mostly of anonymous graves (Photo: Derya Aydın, 2015).

Ahmet tells about the effects of nameless graves on himself in the following words:

> You were going through those bones while you were going there. You felt them. That martyrdom has been established so people are honored, it is a place about which people feel honored. They do not have names, but how do you think they become martyred, in which circumstances I mean? (2016)

Mehmet, who has been in Lice where guerrillas cemetery was constructed for three months, explains the nameless grave as follows:

> Those who become martyred together are buried only in the name of a commander, but nobody's identification is clear, including the commander. That particular name is known but which corpse belongs to whom is unknown (2016).

According to Rihan, there is no difference between the graves:

> Before I go to my son's grave, I go to another and read a prayer. They all mean the same to me. First, I go to Dara's grave and then to my son's. (2016)

Figure 6: Neither dates of birth and death nor place of death is written on almost all of the gravestones at Xerzan Martyr Cemetery (Photo: Derya Aydın, 2015).

As can be seen from the narratives, it can be argued that the anonymity of the graves makes them all metaphorically belong to Kurdistan as a whole.

7.4. The Structure of Cemeteries

I have not been able to visit Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery since conflicts resumed in the summer of 2015, when I began conducting my field research. Entrance and exit to the area where the cemetery is located was completely closed. Only the people living there could go to that side. For this reason, I will convey the architectural structure of the place through the interviewers' narratives. However, I had the chance to go to Dersim and visit the guerrilla cemetery there in the summer of 2015 when I decided to do research on this subject. Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery, located in Dersim, has multiple buildings. The cemetery was built as a place where the guerrilla items included a museum designed as a mosque-cemetery, a hall for rest and relaxation, and a building where the toilets are located. Besides, there was a small garden next to the cemetery.

The cemetery was surrounded by walls against flood waters. There were not only PKK guerrillas that were buried in this cemetery; also TİKKO (Liberation Army of Workers and Peace of Turkey) guerrillas and the bones of insurgents who had lost their lives in 1938 in the Dersim Genocide were buried. The Tikko guerrillas were buried next to each other. Their graves were made in the form of a monument. The bones of the 38 were also placed inside a transparent glass window. There were also benches in the cemetery. Again, there was a large treetop in the cemetery. Inside this oak tree were wooden chairs with cushions in the shape of a cedar. Flowers were planted all over the cemetery. There was also a large fountain in the middle of the cemetery. Sosin talked about the structure of the cemetery in the following words:

> The museum and *mescidins* in the cemetery are very harmonious. The upper part was purple, which attracted out interest. Made from natural stones. There was a fountain. A female guerrillafriend's name was given to it, which was done with great care. There were fruit trees. There were many flowers. Watermelon was planted on the side of Djemevi. (Sosin, 2016)

7.4.1. Cemeteries: Material Culture and Memory

The museum was an example of a vivid memory of both the PKK guerrillas buried here and the first years of the PKK struggle. Both the cemeteries and the goods that were found were exhibited here together. All of the objects had the name to whom they belonged written on top of them: In

this sense, how are objects used to create an economy of memory and relationships in this context? Why are such objects intensely exhibited in these spaces in an intense manner? Binevş describes the museum in the following way:

> Items found in the friend's graves exhibited here. There were pictures of martyr fellows, with their names below. Every side of the museum was filled with photographs. I was with my friends at museum works. Heval Atakan was interested in the museum and was very sensitive. Let's say a friend's buckle or shuttiks ... He was very careful with these things, not to cause them harm. Every time he touched, he felt it. There were female friends' beads, mirrors, tweezers, buckles, combs, hair, wristbands. They were very worn, they even turned into earth, but friends were very sensitive to and protecting them. There were shirts, salwars. In the old days, friends were wearing rubber shoes, so there were rubber shoes. If he knew who it belonged to, he would write it down. For example, there were books, the notes they wrote were still there. Every time we cleaned them, we felt a lot of emotion. I wondered what friends felt when they had them on. Now you see friends, and you understand that the circumstances of that time are more difficult. (2016)

When I visited here in 2015, a guerrilla told me that the binoculars belonging to the PKK guerrillaZilan (Zeynep Kınacı) were brought to the museum by a family many years later. In this sense, the cemeteries are very important in terms of the continuity of the memory of the struggle in Northern Kurdistan.

Buildings such as museum, academy, mosque-djemevi-place of worship constructed in the cemeteries were built by PKK guerillas. In these martyr cemeteries, objects that belonged to the guerillas who died in these regions and were buried in these “martyr cemeteries,” and different objects such as photos, books, mirrors, kefiyes shuttiks rubber shoes, socks knitted out of sweat sleeves were exhibited. On the walls of cemeteries, the photos of deceased guerillas and flags were hanged and the sayings of guerillas were inscribed. Wilton J. Telling suggests that objects have function as a tool for exposing deeper layer of memory and meaning (Telling 2008).

Similarly fountains, pools, pergolas and banks were built within cemeteries. On the gravestones in these cemeteries, PKK and Kurdistan flags were hanged. Gravestones were crafted in different styles in different cemeteries. For instance, while basmala is engraved on the gravestones in Şêxcuman cemetery in Bitlis, such religious scriptures cannot be found in Dersim. Katherine Verdery suggests that “A dead body is meaningful not in itself but through culturally established

relations to death and through the way a specific dead person's importance is (variously) construed." (Verdery, 1999).

7.4.2. Cemeteries and Dersim Massacre: Historical Continuity

The granddaughter of Kamer Agan, the leader of the Haydaran tribe, who lost his life in 1938, reports that after the guerrilla cemetery was established, she took the bones of people who lost their lives in 38 massacre in different places. Ali explains why they brought the massacred in the 1938 massacre to this cemetery:

> There is a stream. There they are murdering all members of the Haydaran tribe. They are getting them line up at that stream and killing them with heavy machinery. ... they're all left open. Even their bones are out. When the guerrilla cemetery was established, we went and asked the Alevi grandfathers. We asked if we could bring those bones. They said you could bring it. But they said, first obtain consent. So, we went and gathered the bones and brought them there. (2016)

Figure 7: The division where the bones from 33 massacres are displayed in Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery located in Dersim.

Sosin interprets the transfer of the bones here as follows:

> The bones from Dersim 38 were brought. I took the brushes to clean them up and cleaned them even though I was afraid of the death. I had very interesting

> feeling. We were careful about the bones as much as we were about the material to be placed in the museum. It feels so different. Think you're cleaning human bones belonging to Dersim 38. How many years later you find and bring and bury them where they should had been buried. (2016)

It was not the only reason connecting the two different dates that the bones of those who lost their lives in the Dersim massacre and the bones of the the ones who lost their lives in the nineties meet here. According to Özsoy, there is also a direct relationship between burial practice and history because burial is also the beginning of a memory. "Burial universally emerges as a practice that provides the temporal and spatial continuity of societies ... Many oublic cmeteries leve their makrs on space and time, and their existence is recorded in history and land " (Ozsoy, 2012). In this sense, continuity between the nineties and the 38 massacre is manifested in this space. Also, the PKK guerrillas who lost their lives in the nineties were the grandchildren of the ones who lost their lives in the 38 massacre, as Ali from the Haydaran tribe puts it:

> Of course, there was a solution process in Turkey in 2014. Everyone hoped that the Kurdish problem would be resolved. People started looking for what they had lost. For example, my sister died in 99 in Lice. I went there too. We went with my parents to the mountains where he became martyrs. I'd been there for days. We had been detained many times before, beaten are insulted. We could not find. Everyone wanted their loss to have a grave. (2016)

Moreover, the introduction of TİKKO's guerrillas here was quite meaningful for the people in a city like Dersim, which is the center of the left movement.

The relatives of the missing people said that the Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery with approxaimately 500 graves and the guerrilla cemetery in Dersim were similar. Rihan describes this cemetery as follows:

> There was a big room, and all the walls were filled with photographs of the Havels buried there. There was a mosque, sink and kitchen. There was camellia. Below the cemetery there was also a two-storey structure and an unfinished guest house. (2016)

7.5. Destruction of Cemeteries

During 11 September and 23 October in 2015, particularly in Ağrı, Muş (Varto), Van (Çatak), Bitlis, Mardin (Nusaybin), Hakkâri, Kars, Dersim, Siirt, Diyarbakır (Lice and Dicle), 11 cemeteries such as "Nisêbîn Agît Suruç Martyr Cemetery" in Bagok, "Mawa Martyr Cemetery" in Siirt, "Sisê Maed Martry Cemetery" in Lice, "Dr Baran and Besê Martyr Cemetery" in Dersim, "Xerzan Martyr Cemetery," "Martyr Ronahî-Martyr İsmail Cemetery" in Varto / Gimgim, "Şêx Saîd Martyr Cemetery" in Pirejman, and "Ronahî Martyr Cemetery" in Şax were destroyed by the military planes of Turkish armed forces as well as by soldier in land. Moreover, a part of the mosques-djemevis-sanctuaries, museums and academies built inside cemeteries were bombed and completely demolished. Kurds tried to obstruct the demolishment of cemeteries, but these bombings was continued. Previously, the state also many times destroyed PKK cemeteries built in Qandil and graves of PKK members that are nested in the public cemetery in Diyarbakır. Ozsoy emphasizes the state's policy around the death as follows: "I contend and will substantiate that the Turkish state's politics over the Kurdish dead follows the logic of killing a life twice, first biologically then symbolically, to eradicate the persistent affective and politico-symbolic power of the Kurds it has already murdered" (2010: 40).

Fatma tells a very interesting anecdote, going to Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery:

> Last time I went to Lice, for example, I went to the martyr Aaron cemetery where the families took wet wipes just to clean up their tombstones, and those wet wipes, when the bomb expoloded the cemetery was covered with such a white cover. I even filmed them via camera. I looked at it and said that must be what they call ammunition. (2016)

Sosin and Binevç tells the destruction of Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery as follows:

> They put a bomb and exploded it. We wanted to go some time later to see and clena there at least a bit but nothing was left. The djemevi mosque museum had all turned into ruins. Fottunately the things belonging to the friend who became martyr was taken. They were taken from the museum. It was obvious they they were bombed. The grave stones were broken. (Sosin)

Figure 8: After the bombing of Martyr Dr. Baran and Martyr Besê Cemetery and Martyr Hevidar and Martyr Amed Cemetery[82]

[82] http: / / siyasihaber3.org / licede-gerilla-mezarligi-bombalandi-218-mezarin-50si-yikildi [access date 07.06.2017]

> There was a pigeon cottage. They put it under fire. The bullet was visible from the traces. I had seen it a few days before the bombing. (Binevş 2016)

After Zilan's sculpture being taken into custody in Dersim, an event as interesting as this takes place after the cemetery is destroyed in Lice. After all the buildings in the cemetery, including the hall, the museum, the library, the kitchen and the toilet, are destroyed, MEYA-DER tries to take two containers here but these are also bombed. It is decided to be taken away on behalf of the person because transferring it as an institution constitutes a problem. They think that the state cannot harm it because it will be a private property when recorded in the name of a person. The person who bought them is Sarya, Amed's mother who is 83 years old. Sarya begins laughing when she tells the story of the containers being into custody:

> I bought it so that people could come over and pray. 27.5, I went to the bank and got a receipt. We delivered the money to the bank. They are loading the containers and taking them to Sisey. The helicopters are coming and the soldiers are cutting in. They leave it and run away. The containers are left out there. Then they caught them, four people. They pick up the boss who I bought the container from, they are catching the five in Qaraz and putting them in handcuffs, and throwing them into the Qaraz prison[83] They put me into prison first and then took me to Qaraz (2016).

In interrogations here, she was asked where she bought the container and how she got the money. The fact that 85-year-old Sarya is taken into custody for this reason became news in the press. Non-governmental organizations and members of parliament go in, but after overnight detention, she gets released as she sent container to the cemetery.

[83] Village of Diyarbakır, whose Turkish name is Kocaköy.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The Kurdish issue, a topic of constant debate on national Turkish agendas and in the international arena. Mainly, these conversations are focused on the issue of status, yet the issue is remains unresolved. The Kurds, who are being assimilated and repressed under the nationalist and repressive sovereignties of different nation states, continue to struggle in the four state territories they occupy.

One of the Kurdish geographies where the state violence is the hardest most harsh is undoubtedly Northern Kurdistan. The nineties are the years when state violence has reached its peak in the form of forced migration, unsolved murders, forced disappearances, detention and torture in North Kurdistan. In addition to violence that the state imposes on this "dirty war,", paramilitary forces such as village guards, JITEM and Hezbollah, have become engaged with uncertain and dangerous practices. As a result of widespread and systematic policies the state has developed in Kurdistan, great losses have been were experienced in the nineties.

Kurdish studies concerning the dirty war deal with events that occur from a macro perspective, within the binary frame of state violence and PKK strategies. However, these studies overlook a great deal of experiences and testimonies. Emotions such as pain, anger, joy, happiness, faith, and love, which motivate people to act, have largely gone ignored. This research suggests that continuity, despite breaks in a war that has been ongoing for 40 years and without "victory" in sight, results from emotions that mobilize the individual. It argues that these feelings can be understood by focusing on the individual's testimonies and experiences. This thesis has emerged from in-depth interviews utilizing method of oral history regarding the daily life practices, testimonies of violence and experiences of individuals, in the context of their mourning practices. As seen, those who constitute the majority of the casualties in the war that took place in Kurdistan in the nineties were the guerrillas directly involved in the conflict. Most of them were collectively

destroyed; which dates, where and how they lost their lives are not (and could not be) recorded. The fate of the majority of the people who lost their lives in conflict, is still unknown, as most of them still have not been able to be retrieved by their families. They were buried where they died either by guerillas, villagers or the village guards. Some of them weren't been buried at all, but were left in the open just where they were killed. As depicted in the stories of the bereaved, the things that happened are not exceptional or coincidental. These are the consequences of the public mourning ban / "hierarchy of grief" policies that the state has put into place in the form of a systematic policy during the nineties. However, these policies are not policies that resulted from the state's conflict with the PKK. These are the old practices that were put into effect in the Republican era and implemented personally on Sheikh Said and Seyid Riza, who were the pioneers of the Kurdish revolts. To conclude, in the traditional society, religion was the main instrument to cope with death. However, it can be said that religion was replaced by the communal memory of the PKK as a state building project. Communal memory as a significant institutional and ideological discourse help to deal with death in Kurdish society. However, it is still difficult to deal with losses for a society that is constantly experiencing violence and death.

As it is revealed in the third chapter from the stories of the relatives of the deceased, the practices of the state in particular for death and mourning practice are multifaceted. These are gradual practices in the form of death being not counted as death, banning the mourning of the dead and the dead not remaining unburied. To leave the corpses unburied in the mountains, on the banks of streams and in the deserts; to abandon the dead to be wasted and with such practices one normally encounters in Greek tragedies were spread and became widespread during this period. The deaths of the guerillas, whose lives were not counted as lives, were not deemed to be death, but were considered in the category of "carcasses." In this sense, not only the lives of the guerrillas but also their deaths have been taken away. As a matter of fact, in none of the news channels can the word "killed" or "lost his life" be heard. These deaths are expressed as "neutralized." The deaths of soldiers who have lost their lives are made an important part of the construction of the Turkish national identity. The state's disposition of "hierarchies of grief" / "discriminative distribution of public mourning" to determine who can express mourning in public and who cannot, has made itself clear in guerrilladeaths; the mourning of deceased's relatives was banned.

The state did not only kill these subjects biologically, but also prevented their lives and their deaths from acquiring any value. In this sense, as the thesis has suggested, the guerrillas were both biologically and symbolically subjected to death. For this very reason, these losses have never been discussed in the public arena; their deaths, like their lives, have remained a great taboo for public debate and academia. But these losses still remain the primary agenda of many people in Kurdistan, as demonstrated by the daily life practices and stories of the deceased's relatives.

This research has revealed that the mourning experienced by the relatives of guerrillas allows for the creation of a new line of struggle, rather than an experience which is totally disruptive to life. This has also been a premise of coping with loss. Almost all of the relatives of the missing people interviewed regard themselves as subjects with a political position. This political position can be seen not only in the descriptions of the relatives of the missing, but also in the practices of daily life. As a matter of fact, the struggle waged by The Peace Mothers (Barış Anneleri) and MEYA-DER (Mesopotamia Assistance and Solidarity for Families with Lost Relatives) is a struggle to bring the political demands of the missing people's relatives out into the public sphere. This struggle places the relatives of the missing, who are exposed to "violence" and "hierarchy of grief" policies, as political subjects in the public domain. At the same time, this brought guerrilla losses to the public sphere. The Peace Mothers (Barış Anneleri) and MEYA-DER members played an active role in the detection of graves belonging to guerillas and in building guerrillacemeteries. Thus, by creating mourning opportunities, they have also wiped the existing hierarchy of grief out of the public sphere.

While the state banned the mourning of rebellious Kurds and punished their relatives, the relatives of the missing people created a new line of struggle against this policy. Thus, mourning has become a part of the resistance in Kurdistan. Practices in mourning houses and guerrilla cemeteries are not practices that disrupt life and place the relatives of missing people in the position of melancholic individuals. While these extraordinary places create the possibility of "deserved" mourning, they have also become places where transfer of experience and witnessing take place. At the same time, this leads to the formation of an individual and collective new memory of guerrilla losses. As a matter of fact, guerrilla cemeteries and mourning houses are not only visited by relatives of missing

persons, nor are they mourned in the places exclusively. What is spoken in these places is not only pain and mourning, but an important part of everyday life and current politics.

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